# AMUSEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE. THE PROVISION OF RECREATION IN LEICESTER, 1850-1914

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# APPENDICES

## SUMMARY

The thesis takes as its subject the development of cultural forms and institutions, exploring constraints on the exercise of choice in the use of non-work time in an evolving capitalist society. By means of a local study, it aims to describe relationships between aspects of popular recreation, especially those involving working class participation, and to relate these to economic and political circumstances. The study focuses upon individuals and organisations providing facilities and creating institutions in which non-work time was spent outside the home.

The body of the thesis consists of discrete but interrelated studies of themes in the development of recreation in Leicester. These concern the relationship between recreation and the workplace (ch.1), the role of religious organisations as providers and critics of recreational activities (ch.2), initiatives by the municipal authorities (ch.3) and licensing magistrates (ch.4), the bases of commercial provision in the drink trade, theatre and sport (chs.4-6) and the engagement of the labour movement (ch.7).

The thesis is written from a critical standpoint which acknowledges as fundamental to the understanding of 19th century recreation the uneven distribution of free time, power and money within capitalist society. But while social control and hegemony are exploited as pointers to appropriate areas of study, they are found wanting as *explanations* of complex historical reality.

In its empirical conclusions, the study confirms the significance of relationships between work and culture, identifying ways in which the economic development of Leicester constrained recreational provision. Commercial agencies are shown to have been relatively weak during much of the period whereas municipal and religious organisations were of considerable importance from the 1860s until the end of the period of study.

## DECLARATION

No part of this thesis has previously been submitted in fullfilment of all or part of the requirements of any degree.

An earlier version of the first part of chapter 5 (on the theatre) appeared in an article 'Patronage,Pleasure and Profit;a Study of the Theatre Royal,Leicester, 1847-1900', *Theatre Notebook* XXXVIII no.2, 1984.

**Acknowledgements**

By convention, a doctoral thesis is understood to be the product of an individual working alone. Long hours spent in libraries and archives give support to such a view, and indeed the candidate rightly has responsibility for any inaccuracies, oversights and misinterpretations to be found in the work submitted. But he or she owes a great deal to those who have advised, encouraged and criticised along the way to completion, without whom no original contribution could have been made. I wish here to acknowledge the help and interest of those both within and outside the academic community who have enabled me to carry out my work. I hope that they will find something of value in its results.

I have been able to devote three years of full-time study to this project as a result of the generosity of the Economic and Social Research Council in granting me a postgraduate training award.

I have been fortunate throughout in receiving the ready assistance of librarians and archivists at the Leicestershire Record Office, the Newarke Houses Museum, Leicester, the Information Centre, Bishop St., Leicester, Leicester University Library, the Northamptonshire Record Office, the Public Record Office, Companies House, City Rd., London, the British Library, the British Newspaper Library, Colindale, the University of Warwick Library and the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick. Those in the Leicestershire Record Office and the Information Centre will be particularly relieved that my requests for large and dusty volumes to be brought from basements and outstores have abbated. The Departments of Local History and Victorian Studies at the University of Leicester kindly allowed me facilities to read M.A. theses by their former students. The librarian of the
*Leicester Mercury* permitted me to examine the paper's collection of 19th and early 20th century photographs.

I have lived in Leicester throughout my period of postgraduate study, and owe thanks to people too numerous to mention who have discussed details of the city's history with me. I wish to thank in particular the staff and students of Bosworth College, Desford, and adult students at the W.E.A. Centre, 101, Hinckley Rd., Leicester, Judgemeadow Community College and Vaughan College for their interest in my work. More specifically, I am grateful to a number of individuals for allowing me to examine sources in their possession. Richard and Helen Leacroft discussed with me their work on Leicester theatre and music hall, while Mr E.E.Snow, historian of the Leicestershire County Cricket Club allowed me to use a number of annual reports and other documents from the club archive. Fr Seeley, of St Paul's Church, Leicester, gave me access to the church's collection of parish magazines and photographs. Tim Hawkins exchanged some valuable references to newspaper articles which he had found in the course of his own work for an M.A. thesis on recreation in Leicester in the mid-19th century. Eric Dunning and Tim Newburn of the Department of Sociology at the University of Leicester lent me copies of their working papers and research reports on the development of football violence.

Any work concerning the social history of Leicester in the later 19th and early 20th centuries should now take into account Bill Lancaster's thesis on the labour movement in Leicester. Bill has been generous throughout with his time and enthusiasm for the town's history. He has been a valuable source of ideas for possible avenues of enquiry, some of which I have been able to pursue. He has read and commented on parts of the thesis at various stages. I wish also to acknowledge advice given by Clive Barker concerning chapter 6, and the general interest in my work shown by Peter Bailey. Ron Greenall and especially Robert Colls, both of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Leicester, have shown both scholarly interest in the thesis and friendly support for my career of the last few years. Rob's enthusiasm for British social history was instrumental

in guiding me to the University of Warwick in 1980.

The staff of the Centre for the Study of Social History is now regretably depleted, but continues to maintain a stimulating environment for study despite the vicissitudes of educational politics. Professor Royden Harrison encouraged me to undertake full-time research, and I benefitted from his and Jim Obelkevich's teaching while following the Centre's M.A. course. My intellectual debts to Jim and above all to my supervisor, Tony Mason, are considerable and, I hope, evident throughout this thesis. I also owe much to fellow graduate students at the Centre, especially Elain Ellen, Mark Clapson and James Kilmartin, and to all those who have contributed to the Centre's seminar programme over the last five years.

Deidre Hewitt has had the unenviable task of typing the bulk of this thesis. The bibliography was produced on the University of Warwick's Systime 8700 computer. The Computer Unit's staff showed remarkable patience with my blundering first, hesitant forays into the world of information technology.

There are a number of grateful acknowledgements of personal help and support to be made. Trevor Barnes, David Berry and Angela and Martin Leonard provided hospitality during my visits to London. My parents, Sheila and Geoffrey Crump, have been supportive of my academic career in innumerable ways during more than twenty years of schooling, with rarely a hint that they wished I'd done something which offered prospects of larger and more secure income. Finally, my wife, Sue, has had considerable financial responsibility to bear during the period of my research, made all the more onerous by the signs of frustration and self-centredness stimulated by the demands of research and writing. Sue and our son, Sam, have been sources of great solace and, in their separate ways, encouragement, to carry this research project to completion.

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the text and footnotes. Names of newspapers are given in full in the text.

AN Athletic News
BHU Band of Hope Union
CETS Church of England Temperance Society
CIJ Club and Institute Journal
CM Council Minutes
ECA Early Closing Association
HWJ History Workshop Journal
ILP Independent Labour Party
LA Leicester Athlete and Midland Counties Bicycle News
LC Leicester Chronicle/Leicester Chronicle and Mercury
LCCC Leicestershire County Cricket Club
LDM Leicester Domestic Mission
LJ Leicester Journal
LM Leicestershire Mercury/Leicester Mercury
LP Leicester Pioneer
LRO Leicester Record Office
LTC Leicester Town Crier
MB Minute Book of the Directors of the Leicester Theatre Co.
MCBN Midland Counties Bicycle News
MFP Midlands Free Press
MOH Medical Officer of Health
NUBSO National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives
PP Parliamentary Papers
PQ Leicester Primitive Methodist Quarterly Guide
PRO Public Record Office
RFU Rugby Football Union
SCHC Select Commttee of the House of Commons
SLR Shoe and Leather Record
TLAHS Transactions of the Leicestershire Archeological and Historical Society
UKA United Kingdom Alliance
VCH Victoria County History
WM Wesleyan Quarterly Messenger

## Introduction

### a) Historiographical Background

In common with other writing in the history of leisure, this study of the development of recreation in Leicester between 1850 and 1914, arises from frustration with some aspects of older forms of social history, once dominant within the discipline, and with the ideological *parti pris* of some more recent approaches. The desire to write history 'from the bottom up', to explore sources which would throw light on the history of the behaviour and attitudes of the ruled rather than their rulers and would-be rulers, produced in the work of the Webbs a tradition of trade union and labour history which has remained influential in a long series of orthodox left-wing historians such as the Coles and, to an extent, Eric Hobsbawm. Their focus is on labour organisations and their leaders, giving primacy to the emergence of a formal labour politics. In its most orthodox, Leninist form, working-class history becomes the story of the forward march from primitive rebellion to the triumph of socialism or at least the establishment of organisations, some of whose members aspire from time to time to bring about such a triumph. In Britain, this means trade unions and the Labour Party.

The realisation that this approach replaced one domination by another within historical study is implicit in the work of the Hammonds, whose concern to recover the experience of industrial and agricultural revolution from the point of view of the dispossessed and deskilled is taken up in E.P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*. In such works, a wider range of sources than those produced by labour leaders is used to reassert the coherence of early 19th century popular political and economic thought, and to establish the active role of a class 'present

at its own making'.[1] For all its virtues and influence, Thompson's work inevitably left gaps which its title and the broad sweep of its conclusions tend to obscure. It is above all an account of early 19th century popular political culture, and radical politics/culture at that. In so far as other areas of experience are touched upon, it is in terms of their relationship to political consciousness. This is notoriously the case with Thompson's treatment of Methodism and other religious beliefs. Leisure, like the family, is briefly dealt with in a chapter on 'Community', and seen in politicised terms. The idealisation and eager celebration of local customs and dialect was 'a conscious resistance to the passing of an old way of life, ... frequently associated with popular radicalism'.[2]

Thompson's remains a history of activists, Luddites and union leaders, Friendly Society officials and Owenites, and of a crowd intermittently moved to translate its belief in a moral economy into protest.

While further studies, such as that of Malcolmson,[3] have filled many of the empirical gaps in the account, dissatisfaction remains, not least because the highly politicised radical movement of the 1830s and 1840s, united behind the labour theory of value, aware of the class domination of those who had benefitted from the Reform of 1832, striving for the Charter or even for a New Moral World, is so unlike the politics of the next half century, and has still less in common with the grudgingly acquiescent

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1. E.P. Thompson, Making of the English Working Class (1968 ed.), p.10.
2. Ibid., p.448.
3. R.W. Malcolmson, Popular Recreations and English Society, 1700-1850 (1973).

working class culture of more recent periods, in which resistance is through rituals much less striking than those of Thompson's plebian crowd. Stedman Jones goes so far as to assert that, in the last thirty years of the 19th century, working-class culture was remade, entering an 'enclosed and defensive world'.[4] Yet despite his view that working-class culture became one of acceptance, not revolt, eschewing overt radicalism, Stedman Jones still shares the perspective of labour history. Popular culture is to be brought into the historical account and related to the problematic of the failure of the British working class to overthrow the conditions of its subjection.

The study of leisure seemed at first to offer historians a means of escaping the overbearing concern of labour history with work and the political and industrial conflicts arising from it, and of reaching an understanding of popular perceptions of society in their totality. By studying the use of non-work time, it seemed possible to bring into the historical account those who were left out of radical politics, or those who resisted it, people who were the despair of radical leaders such as Lovett as much as of a reforming middle class. Along with the history of the family, it seemed to offer a way into the everyday life of the past rather than the extraordinary experience of periods of heightened political activity. But two obstacles await such a project. Sources are invariably deficient. It has proved easier to study institutions

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4. Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-class culture and working-class politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class' in Bernard Waires, Tony Bennett and Graham Martin (eds.), Popular Culture: Past and Present (1982), p.118.

rather than participants, providers rather than consumers. More insidiously, the study of activities which were often explicitly promoted or encouraged as alternatives to politics and disorder raised the spectre of a return to 'history with the politics left out'.

Historians of leisure have thus been led to make the identification of conflict, over control, ownership, legality and access a major theme. This has been articulated at greatest length by Eileen and Stephen Yeo. The very notion of 'Leisure' is itself seen as 'a currently marginalising way of seeing and way of living', but when seen in historical perspective, it can lead 'not to the periphery but to the centre of large, class questions and struggles'.[5] The Yeo s seek to make central to the history of leisure Gramscian notions of hegemony, negotiation and permanent class conflict over definitions. Unlike Stedman Jones, for whom the workplace remains the locus of class conflict, this approach makes conflict a condition of all aspects of daily life. While such conflict is explicit in some developments in the history of leisure, such as the often violent suppression of traditional sports and fairs, elsewhere, it is less easy to observe. This becomes particularly the case in the later 19th century when the most visible changes are due to the efforts of commercial organisations, such as newspaper companies or music hall chains, to exploit a growing popular market. Here the Yeo's introduce the concept of licence, a complex set of means by which the apparent freedom of choice in the use of leisure time is constrained in accordance with the distribution of power in society. In this view,

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5. Eileen and Stephen Yeo (eds.), Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914 (1981), pp.149-150.

> The problem is to see the State through the material presences and ideologies of huge forms of commercialism which advertise their autonomy, their freedom and their supposed subordination to mass, popular demand.[6]

Leisure is thus an area of symbolic conflict over the legitimacy of class rule and a field in which that domination is subtly asserted.

Gramscian concepts of hegemony and negotiation are at once appealing and distracting in the history of leisure. They serve to draw attention to means by which social order is maintained in ways which are not explicitly violent, and remind us that definitions of social situations are neither imposed by one party nor permanent. In this sense, it serves as a radicalised version of the social control hypothesis which has had a prominent place in the history of leisure.[7] But the language of 'conflict' and 'negotiation' can lead to impose on evidence interpretations which exaggerate hostility and intentionality. Room needs to be left for autonomously changing taste and custom, even, despite the Yeo's, for acquiescence. Of course, the conditions which bring about such states still require explanation.

The historical study of leisure has more recently been informed by work in the wider field of cultural studies, deriving ultimately from pioneering contributions by Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, and promoted in particular by members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the Open University.[8] In those writings which have developed

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6. Ibid.

7. A.P. Donajgrodzki (ed.), Social Control in 19th Century Britain (1977); Society for the Study of Labour History 'Conference report: Working-class leisure: class expression and/or social control' in Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin 1976. For Stedman Jones's criticism of the assumptions of this debate, see his 'Class expression v. social control' in Hist 4, Autumn 1977.

8. The standard texts of this approach are Raymond Williams, Culture and Society (1958) and Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (1957). For Williams's more recent position on popular culture, see e.g. Television: Technology and Cultural Form (1974). Richard Johnson gives an overview in trends in the study of working-class culture since the war in 'Culture and the Historians' in John Clarke, Chas Critcher and Richard Johnson (eds.), Working Class Culture: Studies in history and theory (1979). See also the Open University course Popular Culture (Milton Keynes 1981), especially Tony Bennett, Popular culture: history and theory (Block 1, unit 3).

links with semiology, attempts have been made to understand the content of popular culture in terms of its meanings to those who consume its products.[9] There is no necessary contradiction between such an approach and those of the Yeos, but the attraction of such work is that, unlike the dismissiveness of earlier cultural theorists such as Adorno, it assumes that popular culture represents a set of creative activities to be taken seriously, rather than degenerate series of distractions imposed or fraudulently sold to the masses. The willingness to seek a coherent set of values in the products of popular leisure institutions is the more desirable in order to achieve a critical attitude towards the statements of their 19th century opponents. The extensive application of the methods of cultural studies cannot be seen as an answer to the social historian's problems. It cannot provide an insight into past states of mind, and the evidence available cannot provide the detailed account of popular imagery and interpretations of cultural phenomena which would be necessary to write a semiological history of leisure. The discipline points to areas for historical study, but cannot furnish conclusions as well.

The present study is one of the development of cultural forms and institutions. Its concern is to explore constraints on the exercise of choice in the use of non-work time in an evolving capitalist society in an attempt to determine why some activities rather than others achieved popularity. Due to the constraints of the sources used, and by the time which would be needed to extend their range, it is a history of provision rather than consumption, but carried out with the understanding that

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9. e.g. Dick Hebdidge, Subculture. The meaning of style (1979).

providers are only successful if they possess an awareness of the demand they hope to satisfy, or of the tastes they wish to modify. Audiences are not ignored here, but the pursuit of working-class experience has become displaced from the centre of the study.

Despite the claims of one, liberal strand within the sociology of leisure, it is clear from the historical material that it is meaningless to discuss leisure in terms of free choice and the development of a number of 'taste publics' whose members act individualistically.[10] Non-work activities were constrained by income, time available, family, neighbourhood and occupational custom, the law and provision of facilities which cannot be understood in terms of response to demand in the market. At the same time, there is no wish to resort to a Leninist notion of false consciousness which implies that the use of non-work time is distorted by the seduction of people from authentic activity with the offer of safe distractions. The thesis adopts opportunistically a weak version of the Gramscian position, as explained by the Yeos in order to explore at the level of a single town mediations between leisure, work, the shifting political domination of the middle class and the demands and traditions of a dynamic urban working-class population. In so doing, it deals with a number of institutions, some under working-class control, most not, which impinged on the lives of many of the town's inhabitants, but which are for the most part outside the scope of political history, whether that of political parties or of popular protest. Nevertheless it is not a depoliticised history in that it is centrally concerned with the distribution and use of power and control over leisure institutions.

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10. This approach is represented by Kenneth Roberts, Contemporary Society and the Growth of Leisure (1978).

The thesis belongs to a growing body of work in the history of leisure. Preliminary studies on a national basis have been carried out by Hugh Cunningham and Peter Bailey, and a large number of monographs and articles on particular pursuits and areas has accumulated.[11] These generally attempt to go beyond the scope of earlier writing in the history of popular culture such as Brian Harrison's Drink and the Victorians (1972) which had as its main interest the development of pressure groups and their transformation of 'social problems' into issues for legislation. More recent studies, while not ignoring legislation, seek as well to determine changes taking place within popular culture itself. Cunningham's Leisure in the Industrial Revolution has been of particular importance in minimising the role of rational recreationists while reasserting the vigour of popular tradition up to c.1870, while Bailey traces the emergence of commercial organisations as dominant bodies in the provision of leisure. One of the aims of this study is to assess Bailey's conclusion that by the end of the 1880s, a fifty-year process of cultural reconstruction had been brought to some sort of conclusion, and that the major forms of popular leisure which were to dominate the early 20th century were established.[12]

At the level of a local study, it is possible to record the interaction of politics, philanthropy, commerce and working-class tradition in sufficient detail to escape from a model of historical development which over-emphasises the role of parliamentary legislation and national organisations. Yet

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11. Hugh Cunningham, Leisure in the Industrial Revolution (1980). Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (1978). Among the most important collections of local studies are Donajgrodzki, op. cit., Yeo and Yeo, op.cit., Robert D. Storch (ed.), Popular Custom and Culture in 19th century England (1982) and John K. Walton and James Walvin (eds.), Leisure in Britain (Manchester, 1983).

12. Bailey, op.cit., p.5.

it is also true that the relative importance of metropolitan influence in the provinces changed during the period studied here, growing markedly as improved transport and news services facilitated national sporting competitions, touring theatre companies and music hall circuits, and as national legislation came to play an increasing part in regulation of the drink trade. The novelty of such cultural diffusion should not be exaggerated though. In the following chapters, an already precarious localism is threatened by further subjection to national institutions and fashions.

The sub-discipline of urban history has contributed relatively little to the history of leisure. Leisure facilities are discussed in Dyos and Wolff's Victorian City in their own right only in Harrison's article on the dissociation of the functions of the pub. In Dyos's Victorian Suburb, the development of leisure facilities is seen largely in terms of the growing demands of new housing. Where leisure has been discussed within this tradition, as in Helen Meller's Leisure and the Changing City, it has been from a point of view which is uncritical of the modernising, improving ethos of urban reformers. There has been a tendency to follow the methods and concerns of municipal history. While the importance of municipal intervention in the provision of facilities should not be underestimated, there is no reason to accept at face value the self-assessments of urban elites. Municipal corporations were, after all, sectional interests after 1835 as well as before, if in a less blatant manner.

The following chapters are written from a critical standpoint which acknowledges as fundamental to the understanding of the development of 19th century leisure the unequal distribution of power, free time and money within capitalist society. It does not take as a premise though

that every aspect of its development is to be seen as an unmediated aspect of a greater class conflict, nor that change was always the result of coercion, whether explicit or not. The elaboration of connections between the complexities of the internal histories of institutions and wider social change is a key task for the social historian. The form of such connections cannot be assumed before undertaking research.

b) Leicester

Leicester is appealing as a subject for a local study of leisure not because of any claim to typicality in terms of size, occupational structure or political constitution, but because the unspectacular nature of its cultural institutions invites explanation. Its severe regime for the control of drink, the infamous precariousness of its theatrical finances, its relatively slow rise to membership of national sporting bodies are local characteristics which make for a distinctive environment for leisure institutions. At the same time, its strong nonconformist churches, active temperance movement and the very late rise to predominance of the factory system in its principle industries offer fertile areas for the study of the interaction of bourgeois and working class cultures, and the effect of changes in the workplace on popular cultural forms. The absence of any powerful resident aristocratic element left bourgeoisie and working class in at times violent opposition, although the radicalism of one faction of Leicester Liberalism also provided a basis for class collaboration which could be extended from the political to a wider social domain. The well-established, wealthy factory owners who sponsored a distinctive paternalism in Lancashire cotton towns were also lacking in Leicester, with a few exceptions such as Cooper Corah and Walker and Kempson. The town's elite thus needed to find other, collective means

of influencing the development of leisure. Commercial exploitation of leisure, other than in pubs and the earlier music hall, was often carried out with capital from outside the town, especially from the 1890s, but was limited in its success. It was inhibited by the council and the bench, and by the precarious prosperity of Leicester's principal industries, bound as they were to the seasonal and cyclical fluctuations inherent in clothing trades. Finally, the radical traditions of the town's working class provided the possibility of alternatives to municipal, philanthropic and commercial forms of leisure, but was not itself always at one with a workshop-based culture which preserved an artisanal independence, if not the sophistication of some artisan groups earlier in the century, until the predominance of the factory system was finally achieved in the boot and shoe industry in the 1890s. The interaction of these five forces is the focus of attention of this study.

Leisure in Leicester has not received extended historical treatment hitherto. Temple Patterson traces the main institutional developments in passing in his Radical Leicester, while two MA theses have sought to establish an overview of the subsequent period.[13] Otherwise, studies of sports and sports clubs have been limited to wholly internal histories of the institutions concerned.[14] The contribution to the development

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13. A. Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester (Leicester, 1954). Kathryn Gent, 'Leisure activities in Leicester 1870-1901 with special reference to the working class', University of Leicester MA 1976. Tim Hawkins, 'Leisure patterns in Victorian Leicester, 1830-70', University of Leicester MA, 1984. An important study of a single institution is Sarah L. Boase, 'Leicester Pleasure Fairs in Humberstone Gate, 1837-1904', University of Leicester MA, 1979.

14. VCH of Leicestershire, vol. 4. E.E. Snow, A History of Leicestershire Cricket (Leicester, 1949); Noel Tarbolton, From Fosse to City (Leicester, nd).

of recreation and the debate on popular culture in the town by major figures such as Thomas Cook, F.L. Donaldson and F.B. Meyer has not been evaluated.[15]

Other aspects of the later 19th century history of Leicester have received more attention. Industrial organisation is dealt with by P. Head, municipal politics and the development of sanitary policy by Malcolm Elliott, the personnel of municipal politics by Peter Jones and the development of the labour movement since the Chartist period by Bill Lancaster. Other research which has served as valuable background for the present study is that by Dinah Freer on a number of the town's elite families and by David Thompson on religious observance and the reaction to the religious census of 1851.[16]

c) Sources

As with Temple Patterson's book on the history of Leicester in the first half of the 19th century, a major source for the historian of later 19th century Leicester is the local press. Leicester was fortunate in possessing several papers in mid century. The Leicester Journal (1753) and Leicester Advertiser (1842) were Tory, while the Leicester Chronicle (1810) and Leicester Mercury (1836) represented rival factions of the

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15. Jack Simmons, 'Thomas Cook of Leicester', TLAHS 1973-4. F.B. Meyer, The Bells of Is (1894). B.J. Butler, 'Frederic Lewis Donaldson and the Christian Socialist Movement', Leeds University M.Phil 1970.

16. P. Head, 'Industrial Organisation in Leicester 1844-1914', University of Leicester Ph.D 1960. Malcolm Elliott, Victorian Leicester (Leicester 1979). Peter Jones, 'The recruitment of office holders in Leicester 1861-1931', in TLAHS LVIII 1981-2. W. Lancaster, 'Radicalism to Socialism. The Leicester Working Class 1860-1914', University of Warwick Ph.D 1982. Dinah Freer, 'Business families in Victorian Leicester: a study in Historical Sociology', Leicester University M.Phil 1975. David M. Thompson, 'The churches and society in Leicestershire 1851-1881', University of Cambridge Ph.D 1969.

Liberal/Radical coalition until their merger in 1864. These weeklies were joined by other, short-lived ventures such as the Leicester Guardian (1857) and South Midlands Free Press (1859), both with radical sympathies. Leicester's first daily newspaper, the Leicester Daily Post was begun in 1872, and followed in 1874 by the Leicester Daily Mercury. These were merged, together with the Leicester Chronicle and Mercury, in a single group by Francis Hewitt in 1883.[17]

Such mainstream papers, for all their diversity of opinion on electoral politics, tended to be very similar in their coverage of leisure, and generally shared a respectable concensus view of the desirability of improving popular culture. The conventions of news gathering, rather than the predelictions of editors or owners, dictated a common, factual style of journalism which, if of great benefit to the historian in its preference for verbatim reporting of meetings and speeches, and detailed descriptions of new buildings, marches and so on, is frustrating in its lack of analysis. Regular reports of sports matches and theatrical events tend to restrict themselves to narrative, omitting contextual observation on most occasions.

A somewhat different perspective is offered by national trade and special interest papers, and by short-lived local papers produced outside the larger local companies. The latter were often limited to special interests, such as the theatre (Leicester Era, 1889) or sport (Leicester

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17. R.L. Greenall (ed.), The Leicester Newspapers 1850-74: a guide for historians (Leicester 1980) provides an introduction to the Leicester press in mid-century, carrying on from Temple Patterson's remarks on the early 19th century in Temple Patterson, op.cit. Alan Lee, The origins of the popular press in England 1855-1914 is the main authority on national developments in the press during the period.

Athlete and Midland Counties Bicycle News 1883-5), while the Leicester Town Crier (1882-4), initially like the Midland Jackdaw a satirical paper critical of the local council, became in its second year an advocate for the Gospel Temperance Movement. Such papers often lacked great originality or insight and strove to imitate the methods and stylistic pretensions of the mainstream press, but at times they were able to free themselves from the demands of news reporting to present features on local figures and institutions in wider perspective. The second Leicester Guardian (1899-1906), which succeeded the Wyvern (1891-97) for example, ran a series of reports of visits to local church services (1900-2).

The Leicester Pioneer (1894-1923) was the paper of the local ILP, and as such provided a very different account of events from the Liberal press in the early 20th century. Its selection of events was distinctive, inevitably giving greater prominence to Labour party activities and the work of Labour councillors. Yet its coverage of recreation was disappointingly similar to that of its contemporaries, especially after the paper was relaunched in a more commercial form in 1905.[18] Perhaps for fear of losing press facilities, its theatre and sports reporters rarely departed from the same narrative technique used by other local critics. On the occasion of a musicians' strike in the Stoll halls in 1914, when the Leicester Palace was picketed to dissuade the audience from going in, the paper gave sympathetic accounts of the protest in its news columns, but made no reference to the effect the strike had on the shows in its theatre reviews.[19]

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18. LP 11.11.1905.

19. LP 9.1.1914.

Several national specialist papers had regular columns of news from Leicester. These include the trade press, notably the Shoe and Leather Record (1886) and the sporting press. Leicester is rarely mentioned by the Manchester-based Athletic News, but is well covered in the Cyclist, which had its own Leicester correspondent. The Era is a major source for music, music hall and theatre history, and at times fills gaps in the coverage given by the local press. It has not been possible to identify the local correspondents of such national papers, nor their working methods and relationships to the managers of the organisations whose activities they report. As with crime reporting, it seems likely that a symbiotic relationship grew up between press and promoters, hence the limited value of much routine reporting to the historian. For long periods, the press became as much a means of disseminating the self-image of theatrical and sporting enterprises, rather than of assessing their value and intentions. Such sources are conversely at their most valuable at periods when routing forms and procedures had not been established, as when new forms and institutions were emerging, or when they were breaking down.[20]

Records of local institutions are on the whole better for municipal, religious and philanthropic initiatives than for those of the labour movement or commercial providers of leisure. Records of sports clubs and governing bodies survive patchily, and are in some cases difficult of access. That the Theatre Company minute book survived seems to have

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20. On the relationship between the police and crime reporters, see S.J. Chibnall, 'Crime reporting in the British press: A sociological examination of its historical development and current practice', University of Essex Ph.D 1980. On the development of reporting in the national press, see James Curran and Jean Seaton, Power without Responsibility (1981). Tony Mason, 'Sporting News', University of Warwick xerox (n.d.) provides an introduction to the national sporting press.

been due to good fortune, while music halls have left virtually no records of their own. Even as well-established an organisation as the Leicester Temperance Society has left no unpublished 19th century records in public collections in Leicester. A major gap is the lack of Petty Sessions records or 19th century police reports, for both of which it is thus necessary to turn to incomplete reports in the local press. It is unfortunate that the archives of the Dukes of Rutland, which might contain material relevant to the Manners family's involvement with Leicester races, theatre and philanthropic ventures and the withdrawal of county patronage in the mid-century, are not currently available.[21]

There is as ever a lack of sources giving access to working class perceptions. Leicester was the subject of two Parliamentary enquiries into the hosiery industry in 1844 and 1855, and the evidence of hosiery workers, while confined by the restrictions and assumptions of such enquiries, provide great insight into the occupational culture of framework knitters. Other major parliamentary enquiries which may have been expected to generate evidence relevant to the present study, such as those on Friendly Societies or the drink trade, have few or no Leicester witnesses. Local memoirs and histories of the labour movement by participants, such as those by Tom Barclay, F.J. Gould, T. Blandford and G. Newell, Amos Mann and Edward Greening, illuminate some aspects of working class culture, the labour movement and co-operation from within, while Joseph Dare's reports to the Leicester Domestic Mission (1847-73), despite their ideological perspective, is much used as a source for one view of a wide range of more or less informal activities which might otherwise be absent from the historical record.

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21. Letter from the Duke of Rutland's steward.

The local press, other than on the occasion of the publication of annual reports, was largely silent about the financial basis of leisure, part of the appeal of which was that it allowed spectators and amateur participants to escape, albeit in an illusory manner, from the concerns of a capitalist economy. This deficiency has been remedied in part by recourse to the records of defunct Leicester leisure companies, sports clubs and ground companies, preserved in the Public Record Office.[22]

d) Organisation of the thesis

The thesis consists of a number of discrete but interrelated studies of major themes in the development of leisure in Leicester. The first chapter, on leisure and the workplace, explores the implications for the development of leisure of trends in employment in the town's major industry, and especially of change in the hours of work. It also demonstrates that the continued dependence of industry on outwork and small workshop production limited the growth of workplace-based paternalistic support for popular recreations of an improving kind. Chapter 2 suggests that, while individual employers were thus unable to play a major role in the provision of leisure facilities, the town council, having thrown off its mid-century economism, stepped in to fill the gap. Municipal provision had a distinctive impact in shaping the institutional form of popular leisure, but its motives were not ideologically neutral. The third chapter examines the interaction of local authority, in the form of the bench, the reforming zeal of the temperance movement and the pub. It is suggested

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22. On the use of the Public Record Office for the study of the history of popular culture, see Edward Higgs, 'Leisure and the State: the History of Popular Culture as Reflected in the Public Records', HWJ 15, Spring 1983.

that the strength of the Temperance movement, and of a more diffuse temperance sentiment, had a weakening effect on the commercial development of leisure. Chapter 4 examines the cultural impact of churches and of religious movements such as Gospel Temperance and the Salvation Army, and the role of religious leaders both as promoters (of sport, youth groups etc) and would-be controllers of recreational activities. The two following chapters concern the two principal forms of commercial leisure, apart from the drink trade, which came to dominate recreation outside the home by the 1890s, theatre and music hall and sport. Finally, chapter 7 examines how far the labour movement was able to provide a critique of commercial and philanthropic provision of leisure and generate its own alternatives.

There are inevitably gaps in such a study as this, given both the length of the period chosen for study and the all-embracingness of the term 'leisure'. Women's leisure activities are largely neglected. The focus of the study on the development of institutional forms for leisure outside the domestic sphere, almost all of which were created and administered by men, if not only for men, focuses attention away from the home and street, where much of the non-work time (in so far as there was any time free from domestic labour) of married women was spent. Women appear in the study as publicans and drinkers, theatre goers and actresses, music hall artistes and members of the crowd of the halls, but no attempt is made here to draw such material together in order to draw general conclusions. Youth similarly appear in most of the chapters, and clearly posed a recurrent problem to local and religious authorities, sports clubs and theatre managers alike, but it was decided that it would be beyond the scope of the present study to seek to integrate such evidence within the discourse of the sociology of youth.

# Chapter 1

## Recreation and its relationship to the workplace: hours, work discipline and factory paternalism

Central to the emergence of the concept 'leisure is the changing relationship between work and non-work time. While this study does not adopt the definition of 'leisure' as non-obligated (ie 'free') time, the activities which it describes are largely characterised as taking place away from the workplace. While workplace relationships are continually manifested as occupational cultures and class relations, it is also apparent that these could become relatively attenuated, and that the relationship between promoter and audience, or between members of the same audience, may resemble but do not mirror interactions at work. This chapter sets out to examine changing demands on workers' time made by work, and to identify implications for recreational provision and for wider questions of cultural control. Finally, an account is given of attempts by employers to intervene directly in the cultural sphere through the provision of factory-based recreation. A central theme throughout is the long persistence in Leicester of domestic and small-scale workshop production, with consequent rejection by a sizeable section of industrial workers of factory discipline.

### A. Hours and work discipline

#### i. The hosiery industry to 1870

The state of Leicester's hosiery industry was crucial to the town's economic well-being until the growth of alternative industries, elastic web and boot and shoe manufacture, in the 1860s. Hosiery manufacture was in a state of severe depression by mid-century. Evidence to the

enquiry of 1845 from both workers and Edward Allen, chairman of the Board of Guardians in 1844-5, reported the worsening state of trade. Allen said that

> During the last two years, the want of employment has been very general in almost every description of employment, particularly so amongst the stocking makers and the building classes. For the stocking makers I have never known it worse for three years than during the last three years ...[1]

Nor were conditions much better ten years later, when a further parliamentary report concluded that the state of the industry 'has long been and continues to be one of great depression'. John Biggs, MP, one of the wealthiest hosiers and a prominent member of the council, told the enquiry that '"As poor as a Leicestershire stockinger" has become proverb for the last half century; I am, in fact, sick of hearing it'. Biggs had told the previous inquiry of the political dangers of the depression, based on his own experience of anti-Poor Law and Chartist demonstrations earlier in the decade.[2] He was supported in his views by Thomas Wood, a partner of the firm of Mrs. Ann Wood and Sons, who stated that he did not believe

> that the present condition of the working classes can be allowed to remain long as it is, consistently either with justice or safety. They see around them a vast accumulation of comforts principally produced by themselves, of which, however, they have no sufficient share; they look with envy upon the few of their employers who have been successful, forgetting the much larger proportion of the unfortunate, and thus an angry and bitter discontent against their masters, and all above them is engendered, of which the fearful indications may be seen in Chartism in towns, and incendiarism in the country.[3]

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1. PP 1849 XV q.533.
2. Ibid., q.767.
3. Ibid., q.1953.

As a remedy, most employers offered no suggestion other than repeal of the Corn Laws to boost trade, and the gradual working of the market to match the supply and demand for labour. In the long run, the introduction of steam-powered machinery would transform the industry, but nobody thought that was likely in the foreseeable future. The 1845 report concluded that the remedy lay in abstenance from early and imprudent marriages, and in bringing up children to other trades (but gave no indication of which these were to be), both of which would result only from 'the slow operation of improved moral cultivation'. Employers such as Biggs showed signs of taking this recommendation seriously, as evinced by their support for the Temperance Society, National Education, the Leicester Domestic Mission and other philanthropic ventures. But at the same time, the industry was organised in such a way as to inhibit technical change and improvements in the standard of living of framework knitters. Indeed, the 1854-5 report concluded that the system of frame rents and middlemen served to interfere with the working of the market and the principles of political economy.[4]

By the 1840s, few framework knitters in Leicester worked in their own homes, and very few owned their own frames. The majority were employed not by merchant hosiers like Biggs, who owned the warehouses, but by middlemen who sub-contracted work for the warehouses, owning some frames themselves, but also operating those belonging to the hosiers or in some cases to small capitalists, including tradesmen and publicans. For such

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4. 'Your committee are of opinion that a profit thus obtained perpetuates the use of imperfect and inferior machinery for the sake of the rent, and thus prevents the adoption of improved and more economical modes of production ...'. Ibid. Report. Note that the manufacturers on the committee including William Biggs, voted against the report.

people, a frame represented a means of investing savings and providing an income in old age. The framework knitters paid rent and other deductions to the middlemen, from whom they received raw materials and wages; they had no contact with the hosiers. As Thomas Winters, secretary of the Society for the Protection of Labour, an early hosiery union, observed, 'the manufacturers are the least capable of practically knowing the difficulties that the workmen labour under, of any class that I know, because they have no connexion, legally or otherwise, with the workmen ...'.[5] While the philanthropic and social involvements of the hosiers may be seen in part as an attempt to overcome this fissure, working-class witnesses to the parliamentary committees frequently state that the hosiers used the legalistic framework of contracts between middlemen and stockingers to protect their economic interests. Several cases were reported of hosiers refusing to discuss any matters relating to the trade with those employed by their middlemen. Perhaps more crucially, several hosiers, on questioning, admitted that while they naturally condemned the malpractices described by framework knitters, such as spreading work between frames in bad times while still charging full rent for less than a full week's work, they did nothing to ensure that they did not go on. To do so, it was argued, would be to interfere in the contract between middlemen and workers. As a result, there were always grievances on the part of the stockingers against the system under which they worked. In bad times, this culminated in support for radical measures, as in the Chartism of the 1840s, or the petition of 1853 against frame rents which was signed by 12-13,000 inhabitants of the town.[6]

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5. PP 1854-5 xiv q.4840.

6. Ibid., 1719.

This state of endemic crisis, comparable to the 'industrial involution' which Levine describes for nearby Shepshed,[7] and the attenuated nature of the relationship between the large capitalists and the bulk of the workforce, coupled with the customary practices of a once prosperous domestic industry now in decline, form the background for consideration of the problem of time and work-discipline in Leicester in the last decades before the rise of large-scale factory production.

ii. The working week

The concept of standard hours is inappropriate to an industry in which employers felt themselves unable to enforce attendance and workers chose to work much more intensively later in the week than at the beginning. Moreover, garment trades were highly seasonal, so that the amount of work available, and the time needed to complete it, varied during the year, irrespective of the general state of the industry. Nevertheless, parliamentary inquiries sought to ascertain what hours were worked, and the answers they received provide a basis for understanding the constraints imposed on workers' time by work. There is no way of knowing how far the figures given by the framework knitters represented maximum hours, in order to impress the commissions with the justice of their request for the abolition of frame rents, nor whether or not the witnesses were selected for their diligence and sobriety. Certainly the middlemen, hosiers and other middle class witnesses questioned the regularity of attendance of many workers, but they too had a position to defend. For

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7. David Levine, Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism. (Cambridge 1977).

all the qualifications which need to be made, the descriptions of the effects of labour which was at once extensive in duration, intensive in the concentration needed for intricate work (damage to eyesight as well as posture were often noted) and badly paid are striking.

In 1850, all textile trades were brought within the factory acts, although since much of the work in Leicester was carried on in workshops with less than 50 employees, regulation had to await a further act in 1863. The need for child labour, as winders, meant that these acts were effective in limiting the hours of adult labour as well, unless illegal hours were to be worked. Although one witness in 1845, William Jones, a glove maker, used the 10 hour day as a standard measurement, as Bienefeld suggests became normative during the 18th century, the majority of witnesses do not refer to such a standard.[8] There were small differences between the hours worked in various branches of the trade, but the patterns are broadly similar. In all cases, it is difficult or impossible to allow for mealtimes since, unlike under factory conditions, these were infinitely variable. It was possible for workers to dispense with breaks altogether. One witness reported a glove hand who 'has sat and eaten his meals part of the time on his seat-board instead of going home to eat them'. Abraham Martin, employed in the straight-down hose branch, considered that his own work was 'more fit for a horse than a Christian' and said of the man that ate at the frame 'If he was to do a week's work like that twice he would be knocked up, he could not do a third'.[9] It is probable that

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8. M.A. Bienefield, Working Hours in British Industry. An economic history (1972). PP 1845 xv q.276.

9. Ibid., q.159ff; q.651.

most workers usually took two mealbreaks at home, and since workshop and factory hours allowed a total of 1½ hours, it would be surprising if framework knitters took less than that, except when the pressure of work was at its most intense, late in the week.

In the most highly unionised branch, glove making, witnesses most often gave their hours as 6am - 10pm, with 6am - 8pm or to dusk in the summer. One witness said that the hours varied between 12 and 16 per day, while others gave figures of 10 - 12 and 14. Witnesses who were middlemen in this branch spoke of workshops open from 6am - 8pm or 6am - 10pm. Hours in straight-down hosiery were broadly similar, although two witnesses spoke of starting at 5 and 5.30, while one of the shirt hands reported hours of 5.30 to 11. While the samples are very small, the impression given is that the longest hours were worked in the wrought hose branch, which was still more often based on domestic production than other branches, and produced luxury goods, out-competed at the cheap end of the market by straight-down (cut-up) hosiery. Of the four witnesses in the branch, two reported 17 hour days.

The effect of such hours on social life are not difficult to imagine. Josiah Johnson, a straight-down hose maker, said that the work

> produces such a weakness of mind and body that they are more inclined to go to rest than to sit up and amuse themselves, therefore, for that reason, if they desire to enjoy themselves in any form or shape whatever, they are totally prevented by excessive labour; and many operatives who are desirous of educating themselves, so far as they are capable of doing so, are prevented entirely by the excessive labour.

The evidence of Benjamin Bates, a wrought hose maker, is the more forceful for being more personal: 'Sometimes I go home from my work so faint

and hungry that I can hardly walk across the street, and when I have got home there has been nothing for me, or if there has been anything, it has only been a bit of dry bread'.[10]

By the time of the 1855 report, such extremely long hours were probably less frequent, although the committee was less solicitous to obtain the direct evidence of the men themselves and depended for information largely on statements from hosiers who had a vested interest in keeping workshops outside the Factory Acts. Both Robert Walker, who owned 130 frames, and John Baines, who had 250-300, reported 10 - 12 hour days as usual. Thomas Collins, owner of 150 frames, said that a good, average hand would work six 10 hour days per week, 6 - 6 or 7 - 7, with two hours for meals. Baines claimed that the men were not exhausted by such hours as they 'often grumble, and will sometimes, particularly before a holiday, request the overlooker to allow the factory to be open an extra hour, showing that the men are not put at the full stretch'.[11] The hands involved were more likely to be protesting against the regularity of hours imposed by factories and some workshops, with their definite closing hours, rather than the total hours of work.

The growth of some larger units of production in the 1860s, ahead of full mechanisation, meant that the factory acts came more widely into operation, and very late working was reduced in such establishments. Thomas Corah, whose factory was steam-powered in the 1860s, but who also received work at his warehouse from over 2,000 hand frames in town and country, said in 1863 that the demands of sending goods by rail were such that the last dispatch was now at 8pm, and that consequently few

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10. Ibid., q.1499; q.1440.

11. Ibid., q.2429.

warehouses were open after 9pm. There was now less late work and greater effort earlier in the week.[12] Other witnesses supported Corah's views, although there was once again pressure on those with interest in workshops and warehouses to avoid extension of legislation. Walker and Kempson's hours were 8am to 7pm, with occasional overtime to 8 or 9pm, while William Marr, a middleman with 40 frames, said hours were from 6 or 8am to 9pm, with no later working on Fridays. But Marr also reported the long hours expected of winders due to the hours kept by their masters, and claimed that 'As a rule ... men of this class (ie the poorest) are very ignorant and scarcely know they are doing anything wrong in keeping them up at work so late as they do'.[13] Increasingly, the issue of hours was to centre on two themes; the problems of workers in factories, regulated by law, regularly inspected, and open to Trade Union negotiation, and those of workers in workshops, also regulated, but very difficult to inspect, especially when responsibility was transferred from the local authority to the Factory Inspectorate in 1871.

iii. Seasonal variation

Thomas Smith, a glove hand, told the 1845 commission that in all his 25 years in the trade, 11 of them in Leicester, he had never been fully employed for a whole year. Due to the seasonal demand for different types of clothing, the industry went through a slack period each year, which may have eased some of the worst effects of long hours, but which offered little comfort to families whose incomes can rarely have been

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12. PP 1863 xviii. Evidence of Thomas Corah.

13. Ibid. Evidence of William Marr.

able to allow for enforced idleness. Leicester's trade was largely based on production of woollen goods, so that most work was for the winter market. James Cummings, a middleman for Biggs, said there was usually full work for nine months in a year, but that seems a generous estimate. Josiah Biggs, another middleman, estimated that his frames were fully employed for 12 weeks each spring and from August to November, with one-third to one-half work the rest of the time, while John Baines, a hosier, said there was not full work six months in the year, and sometimes it was worse. As foreign sales grew, the season lengthened. Biggs reported in 1863 that after the home season in the second half of the year, there was demand for one or two months' production for the Australian market, followed by a month's work for Canada. The best foreign market, the USA, was dominated by Saxon competition. Yet despite such signs of better business, the hosiery trade remained depressed and fluctuating seasonally into the 1870s, when a report into the working of the Truck Acts noted that even in a good year, there was only full work for eight months in the year.[14]

Each winter thus brought the prospect of mass unemployment, and it is significant that the large demonstrations against the poor law administration in the late 1850s and early 1860s occurred early in the year.[15] Until 1860-1, each winter saw the opening of a public subscription to help the poor. Short work could appear suddenly, and the experience of disrupted work must have been a common one. As a glove hand, John Hill, told the 1845 commission, 'it is not many weeks that we work with a clear run'.

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14. PP 1845 xv qq.465, 2456. PP 1854-5 q.2513; PP 1863 xviii evidence of John Biggs. PP 1871 xxxvi (30).

15. B.G. Chamberlain, A Report as to the Administration of the Poor Law in the Leicester Union (Leicester 1861).

There was little alternative employment for framework knitters. For some, seasonal migration, to Nottingham or Derbyshire, where cotton goods were made, provided a means of support during a slack season of 2½ to four months. Others stayed in Leicester, very few keeping their jobs in the woollen trade. At other times of the year, agricultural work may have been available, as Richard Mitchell, a hosier, noted in 1854/5. But the harvest season was at the wrong time of year as far as Leicester framework knitters were concerned, and in any case, their poor physical condition made them unsuited to labour of that kind.[16]

The implications of such insecurity were not lost on Joseph Dare, who, despite the confidence of most of the other witnesses to the 1863 inquiry into the employment of children that work was becoming more steady, observed that 'there is great irregularity of work, as manufacturers now work so much more to order instead of to stock, and in some cases will not work at all unless they have orders'. Indeed, nothing had happened to undermine Dare's view, expressed in 1851, that bad trade led to 'involuntary idlenesss' and consequent loose habits, confirming hosiery workers in their poverty, ignorance and immorality. They were thus all the less likely to make the individual efforts at reform which Dare and his patrons at the Great Meeting saw as their only real way forward.[17]

iv. The working week: St. Monday

The irregularity of the working year was unfortunate for both employers and employed, although the system of frame rents ensured a return on capital even at slack times by spreading work, a practice which also

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16. PP 1845 xv qq. 128, 518, 2525.

17. PP 1863 xviii pp 388 ff. LDM 1851 p.5.

ensured that there would be no labour shortage at busy times. There was dispute among witnesses as to the causes and consequences of a weekly pattern of work in which Monday was a rest day, followed by increasingly intensive rhythm of work culminating in very long hours at the end of the week.

Working-class witnesses explained the irregular working hours as a consequence of the putting-out system, in which workmen were unable to start work until they had received raw materials from the middlemen. Thomas Smith said that 'the journeyman have frequently to wait a day or even two in a week for work in consequence of the undertaker not having brought it from the warehouse...'. Similarly, work was collected early on Saturdays, so that there was no work on Saturday afternoon, and in some cases it was necessary to stop on Friday night. Middlemen and hosiers disputed this, claiming that there was always sufficient yarn left to start on Monday. Some claimed that they had to wait for workers to turn up after the workshops had opened with materials on hand. The cause of St. Monday, according to employers, was the indiscipline of the men.[18]

The phenomenon is not convincingly explained by either of these. In slack times, delay on the part of middlemen, especially the less scrupulous who would still charge full rent, was a means of maintaining income at the expense of the framework knitters. On the other hand, when work was plentiful and incomes relatively high, the workers seem to have had a greater propensity to take time off. In any case, it seems unlikely

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18. 'It is general custom of the manufacturers to give out their work on the Monday or the Tuesday morning, and also to take in the work on the Saturday earlyish ... A number of hands have to give over on the Friday night very often ...'. PP 1845 xv q.117. See also ibid. (259) ff. and q.2758.

that St. Monday originated in the need to wait for materials; nor does that account for the use to which the time was put. White's report on the 1863 inquiry steered clear of committing itself to either position, and observed that

> owing partly to the lateness of orders and the supply of materials by the warehouses or intermediate employers ... partly to the general habit of the men of "shacking", or idling in the early part of the week, even, or still more, when they have work, coupled with the necessity of finishing the work by "taking-in day", usually Saturday, when it is taken to the warehouse ... an excessive pressure of work is thrown on infants and periodically upon very young children ...

A heavy burden was also borne by the seamers, who were all female, and who had to work at the same pace as adult male workers. They might not finish work until all had been done.[19]

Accusations of irregular work were central to the employers' case against the abolition of frame rents, and so occupy a significant part of their evidence to parliamentary inquiries. They were also intended to undermine the sympathetic response engendered by accounts of long hours and physical exhaustion. George Shaw, MD, physician to the Infirmary and the fever hospital, when consulted about the general health of the Leicester hosiery workers, turned the blame on the workers themselves. For those who did too much work, it was

> an excess of labour brought on in great measure, in my opinion, by the irregularity of their hours of labour, Monday invariably being kept as an idle day, as frequently is the case with a portion of Tuesday.[20]

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19. PP 1863 xviii (264-5):- 'The parents, particularly the mothers, look oppressed and haggard with and care of the children, heavy, stunted and without animation'.

20. Ibid., q.3053 ff.

Thomas Collins doubted if many of the claims to long hours were true at all; where they were found, they were the direct result of holidaying in the first part of the week. He said that

> There are many who profess to work 16 or 17 hours a day but I do not think they do that; they may work 12 hours a day; they often will not begin work until Wednesday, or perhaps Thursday, and the rest of the week they will begin at 4 in the morning and work till 10 at night.[21]

The connection between irregular hours and drinking was often made and some witnesses described the practice of going on drinking sprees once any extra money was earned. It is difficult to evaluate how far such claims were aimed at legitimating in a moralistic way the practice of severe work discipline through frame rents. John Baines was most explicit on this subject in 1854/5, when he claimed that

> sometimes a man will work very hard for a week or a fortnight, and then he will drink for a week; consequently he gets no wages for that week, but I take my rent and charges from him, because I find him a frame and a man to attend upon him.[22]

It is not difficult to see why St. Monday survived for a relatively long time in this industry, and why, unlike in Birmingham, there was no practical campaign against it by capitalists. For middlemen, it provided an opportunity to spread work, and to dispatch raw materials in other people's time, while legitimating the charging of frame rents as the only thing which made the men work efficiently, like a tax in a subsistence economy. As far as the hosiers were concerned, St. Monday may have been an affront to their sense for public order and decorum, but it cost their business nothing since the goods came to the warehouse equally well if they were made on Monday morning or Friday night.

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21. PP 1854-5 xiv q.1405.

22. Ibid., q.2399.

v. The origins of the factory system

As elsewhere, spinning became a steam-powered, factory-based industry long before the industries which used its output were similarly transformed. Mills such as the Friars Mill were in operation by the 1820s, and possibly much earlier.[23] Nevertheless, such enterprises employed only a very small part of the labour force, and it was not until c.1850 that efforts were made to change the relations of production in the hosiery trade away from the frame rent system which had been dominant since the early years of the century.

As P. Head observes, a major difference between the evidence presented to the two inquiries in 1845 and 1854/5 lies not in the condition of the workers, but in the practices of some of the employers. The 1854/5 report witnessed an industry on the verge of transition to a new form of the exploitation of labour. In 1845, William Biggs, John Biggs's brother, said that 'we have no objection to the factory system, but on the other hand, we have no sufficient reasons for adopting it ...'. While Thomas Collins expressed preference for the factory system, it ensured better quality work, with less yarn lost through pilfering.[24] There was also the advantage that it gave greater control over the completion of orders. At that time, several employers were trying to modify the putting-out system. Workshops, with up to 40 frames, were increasingly favoured by hosiers. As Henry Rawson, a partner in Rawson and Field's, said, congregation of frames in shops 'makes a person's business more

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23. Shirley Ellis, A Mill on the Soar (Leicester 1978) pp.22-3.
24. PP 1845 xv qq.882, 985.

systematised, and more easily managed'. Meanwhile, Biggs had recently introduced the net system, under which deductions were made progressively according to the amount of work finished, as opposed to the flat rate of the rent system. Other employers were reluctant to implement it, since, as Francis Warner explained: 'if a man has plenty of work and he neglects it for a whole week, I do not see why the master that holds the shop should lose his profit ...'. John Biggs, for whom the rent system was 'a dead weight upon the community of the midland counties', defended the net system as giving the hosier and middlemen greater interest in hiring the best workmen, likely to drive old workers and children, who could not produce much, out of the trade, improving the regularity of work for those who remained.[25] The replacement of frame rents demanded new forms of work discipline, and most of all regular attendance. Ultimately it implied the imposition of factory discipline, something which was not easily achieved before the introduction of steam power.

By 1855, Biggs was dealing with middlemen like William Cummings who were running large workshops, but it was impossible to impose any limit on the movements of workers. John Baines had tried to operate without middlemen, but was unable to get sufficient labour for his factory in good times, and at all times failed to enforce regular hours. He felt himself forced to maintain a system of charges. Thomas Collins was more successful. In 1855, he had 106 frames in a factory working on the net system, and was pleased with the results: 'I gain one thing, the hands are kept to regular time; they work regularly, and they get

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25. Ibid., qq.2938, 275. PP 1854-5 xiv qq.365ff.

regular wages every week, and besides that, they feel much better at the week's end...'.[26] Collins found that he got a better class of worker under this system - perhaps the lure of better wages enabled him to be as particular about who was taken on, as another employer, Thomas Corah, was. Collins envisaged that within ten years, factories would take over the trade but they did not dominate the trade until the 1870s, and workshops proved flexible enough to last, surviving even the limitations imposed by the factory and education acts. He was correct, though in seeing factory production as capable of restoring good relations between hosiers and framework knitters, although it could not guarantee them. Indeed, Thomas Corah emerged during the 1850s as one of the largest hosiers in Leicester, operating as a paternalistic employer, with works' treats and a relatively peaceful history of labour relations throughout the century. In 1864, Corah opened the St. Margaret's mill, his first steam-powered factory. Yet as with all paternalists, generosity masked a ruthless approach to business. Work discipline was to be strict, better wages had to be paid for with less freedom. In 1855, Corah said that 'in a steam factory we should not allow an hour, or even half an hour's absence'.[27] Corah's paternalism and technical innovation paid off, at least in the sense that the firm, unlike other big firms such as Biggs and Harris, survived the period between 1860-1900 which saw many failures, and the removal of several firms to the county, where wages were lower and the workforce less organised.

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26. Collins pioneered the use of steam powered rotary frames in 1844, but does not seem to have introduced them on a large scale. PP 1854-5 xiv qq.1223 ff.

27. Ibid., q.3016.

Unlike Birmingham, Leicester's St. Monday was not the preserve of a group of wealthy artisans. Its adherents were chiefly stockingers, and later also boot and shoe workers (see below) whose precarious, involuted trade rarely brought good returns, but in which hours could be very long. There is little evidence that St. Monday became a day for improvement and excursions in Leicester, but was rather a day for release and recuperation. Saturday, as taking-in day, seems to have become a half-holiday very early. There was no basis for the substitution of a Saturday half-holiday for Monday - as St. Monday was done away with due to the spread of factory production, the compensation was that hours were more regular within a longer working week.[28] The large number of small units in boots and shoes, which saw an extension of putting-out in the 1860s, and the survival of workshop production on a large scale into the 1890s, ensured that irregular hours continued to be worked by a large number of Leicester's working class. Nevertheless, in hosiery, the higher wages paid in factories and the relative decline in productivity of outworkers and in the smaller workshops encouraged the move to the factory. Joseph Dare thought the trend desirable, since it brought under the supervision of the State the welfare of the next generation, and so offered the possibility of moral improvement. He reported that

> In factories the system of work and other arrangements are excellent, in consequence of the factory regulations, and it would be a great blessing if such regulations could be extended to all juvenile labour, as in other places the young are too often sacrificed to ignorant parents, exacting masters, and sometimes to the ill-treatment of careless and drunken journeymen.[29]

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28. On the working week in Birmingham, see Douglas A. Reid, 'The Decline of St. Monday 1766-1876', Past and Present, 1976.

29. PP 1863 xviii, q.385. Evidence of William Biggs: 'With the increase of wages gained by working in factories, and a diminution of wages of those who work out'. See also ibid., q.388.

vi. Changes in hours, 1870-1914

Bienefeld has described the 1870s, and particularly the years 1871-4 as the time of the last general reduction of working hours before the First World War, in which there were 'substantial reductions to virtually all of the organised trades ...', with a wave of strikes over hours in 1872. The previous decades had seen 'a substantial demand for leisure', in which the men had repeatedly refused to be bought off by wage increases. While the slump of 1862 had interrupted the trend, a wide range of trades achieved reductions in the years 1863-7, led by the building industry. By 1870, most London trades worked a 58½ hour week, with a 4 o'clock finish on Saturday. This process was 'the beginning of a general readjustment of normal working hours', which by 1875 had established a normal week of 54-56½ hours, and a 9 hour day, legislatively confirmed, at least in textiles, by Mundella's Act of 1874. By 1876, a government report found the Saturday half-holiday nearly universal, and employers' counter-attacks after 1875 had little effect towards reversing the gains. After the period of widespread wage reductions, a pattern more common to the earlier nineteenth century returned, in which changes in hours were much more discontinuous than those in wages. Such reduction of hours as there was was due either to legislation or to technological changes, as in boots and shoes and printing.[30]

Such materials as are available suggest that while Bienefeld's general chronology is broadly appropriate, both the pace and causes of change in Leicester differ significantly from his model. The difficulty of dealing with a concept of normal hours in both hosiery and boots and

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30. Bienefeld, op.cit., pp.86ff.

shoes in their pre-factory phases should be apparent from the previous section. The period 1860-80 sees if anything the establishment of a 'normal' day for workers in hosiery and the larger boot and shoe factories. It seems that hours were often in advance of national trends in some firms. William Henry Walker, deputy chairman of the Leicester School Board and partner in a firm involved in both of Leicester's major industries, told the commission into the working of the Factory Acts in 1876 that his hosiery factory worked 52½ hours, and the shoe factory 54 hours. Daniel Merrick, on the other hand, a framework knitter and prominent trade unionist, said his hours were 6am - 5.30pm, with 1½ hours for meals, but made no mention of a Saturday half holiday. The hours had been reduced by half an hour in 1874. Merrick drew attention to the longer hours in workshops, especially at the end of the week.[31]

As in other towns, the building trades were to the fore in industrial struggles in Leicester at this time. The town's new prosperity provided building workers with an advantageous market position at the beginning of the upturn after 1862. In April 1863, the brickmakers of Leicester were able to win an advance in wages and a reduction of hours from 6am-7pm to 6am-6pm. It is significant, though that during the negotiations it was made plain that time was not to be an obstacle to settlement if a wage increase was won.[32] This represented an attitude to leisure time contrary to that envisaged by Bienefeld; the brickmakers were quite willing to be bought off if necessary. Similarly, the building dispute of 1872, nominally part of the 9 hours campaign, seems to have had little

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31. PP 1876 xxx q.7198, 7211ff.

32. LC, 30.3.72.

to do with leisure. The chairman of the Leicester and Leicestershire General Building Trades Society, an employers' association, told his members that very limited concessions would suffice to avoid a strike, and hours are given little prominence among them.[33] For building workers, hours were not of concern chiefly because of the demand for leisure - such a seasonal trade would provide more than enough free time taking the year as a whole - but as a means of exerting control over the work process. Building workers resisted the introduction of piecework and thus had to try to limit hours and overtime in order to prevent the effective reduction of the rate for a day's work. Later, strict rules against overtime were to be included in union rule books, as when the Carpenters and Joiners imposed a 6.30pm limit on all work in 1893.[34] Such rules would also have the effect of spreading work in times of bad trade.

1872 also saw industrial action at the Leicester Chronicle, albeit a brief skirmish put down by the dismissal of the three trade unionists involved. In an editorial tendentiously entitled 'The working classes:- short hours and high wages', it was stated that 'the years 1871 and 1872 will long be remembered by the working of this country as a period of unexampled prosperity and successful effort...' with especial success in the hours movement. But, the editorial continued, the laws of political economy were not to be challenged by combination, as among the paper's own typographers, some of whom had struck in favour of the Provincial Typographical Society's scale of hours and wages. What is most interesting in this case is that the Chronicle claimed that it was already working

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33. LC, 30.3.72.

34. John Walton, 'A History of Trade Unionism in Leicester to the End of the 19th Century', University of Sheffield MA thesis, 1952.

a 50 hour week, six hours less than the PTS's target, and so seems to have had no difficulty in preventing serious union action.[35] As in the case of some hosiery factories, it appears that the firm had already conceded shorter hours in advance of the national trend. Similarly, the Saturday half-holiday was established early in Leicester, in hosiery as part of the pattern of work in the putting-out system. J.F. Hollings, addressing a meeting of the local Early Closing Association in 1856, was already calling for an extension of the half holiday, which he said 'emanated from the staple trade of the town', something which, he added more questionably, 'exhibited in a creditable manner the public spirit of the manufacturers of Leicester'.[36] Corah's introduced 2pm closing on Saturdays in 1858, and by 1863, according to the hosier Walker, most warehouses were observing the half day.[37] The Chronicle, commenting on the desirability of the new Thursday early closing for shops in 1868, observed that 'Happily for large classes of workers, the Saturday afternoon is now a regular holiday'. It is likely that for many, it had long been so, although work may once have finished somewhat later in the afternoon, at c.4pm for framework knitters.

vii. The boot and shoe industry

The issue of work discipline in the boot and shoe industry involved the participation of management, union (NUBSO) and a workforce imbued with a work ethic derived from their experience of pre-factory working.

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35. LC, 27.4.72.

36. LC, 4.10.56.

37. PP 1863 xviii. Evidence of Thomas Walker.

The matter was by no means settled by the indoor working agreement of 1891, nor by the Shoe Trades Arbitration Conference of August 1892.[38] The union's position demonstrates powerfully Stedman-Jones's contention that organised labour often had little sympathy for certain features of working-class culture. For the leadership, the hours issue was of secondary importance to more general problems of wages, job security and regularity of work, and indoor working was demanded against the wishes of a large part of the labour force.[39] When the question of imposing new work discipline was discussed in 1892, there is little to suggest any challenge by the union to the patterns of work and leisure established in the new factories.

Sympathetic as the union was to the abolition of domestic work and the flexible use of time that went with it, fear of confronting too openly shoe workers' old habits made them unwilling to give more than moral support to the employers. At the Arbitration Conference, Ward complained that

> they had in Leicester recently adopted the indoor shop arrangement for the riveters and finishers, and they found a very grave difficulty in keeping order in their various shops. The men having been used to working in their own homes, at their own pleasure and when they liked, had formed habits which were somewhat difficult to eradicate ...[40]

Although pressed to take responsibility for enforcing discipline on behalf of the union, Inskip, the NUBSO delegate, would do no more than agree to the resolution that 'this arbitration board affirms the necessity of proper regulations for maintaining order and regularity in the workshops, and pledged itself to support the manufacturers in carrying out the same'.[41]

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38. SLR 29.5.1891; 3.7.1891. LDP 11.8.92.

39. Stedman Jones 1977. SLR 8.11.90 passim.

40. LDP 11.8.92.

41. LDP 12.8.92.

But this was by no means the end of the story, nor was the Conference's agreement on a basic 52½ hour week for Leicester a definitive statement of actual working hours for the remainder of this period. Neither the strength of established practices nor the vaguaries of demand in the industry were conducive to so orderly a reform of work discipline. Indeed, it was to be 10-15 years before a fully 'modern' pattern of work and leisure was universally established in the boot and shoe trades. In order to understand the persistance of apparently archaic features, it is necessary to examine more closely the occupational culture of Leicester's boot and shoe workers.

Most of the features of the culture of Northampton boot and shoe workers described by Brooker are identifiable in Leicester as well. This is hardly surprising, given that so many Leicester workers were migrants from Northampton, and the same pattern of domestic work and small workshops prevailed. Their irregular working day, cultivation of St. Monday and holiday pattern seemingly impervious to employer control are late examples of the kind of practices described in other contexts by Reid and Rule.[42]

As in artisanal trades proper, prosperity and irregular work went hand in hand in the 1880s. Spring 1886 was a busy season in the Leicester trade, and the Shoe and Leather Record's correspondent observed with regret that

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42. On Northamptonshire shoeworkers, see Keith Brooker, 'The Northampton Shoemakers' Reaction to Industrialisation: Some Thoughts', Northamptonshire Past and Present, 1980. On artisanal occupational culture, see Reid, 1976, John Rule, The Experience of Labour in 18th Century Industry (1981) and Sidney Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield (1959). Much of the evidence for the present section comes from the Shoe and Leather Record, a trade newspaper, sympathetic to innovative employers and ill-disposed to trade unions and customary working practices alike, yet at the same time often sceptical of the possibility of reform.

> It would be very pleasant ... were it possible to say that all the workmen took the full advantage of the harvest they might now reap. But many during such times as these are too fond of displaying a spirit of independence. A large batch, or, with small manufacturers, perhaps a whole staff, of workmen will throw down their tools and go out for "fresh air". And they continue this taking of "air" for several days ... [T]hey will march briskly to a neighbouring factory, and induce men there employed to follow the pernicious example...[43]

This criticism applied to rivetters and finishers, not the elite clickers, whose work was already a factory occupation and whose wage levels were higher. In the 1890s, St. Monday was still most popular with the two former groups of workers, and it was reported that 'Your ideal rivetter and finisher must keep St. Monday sacred; he must attend the local race meetings, rabbit-coursings, trotting, bicycling, and foot-racing handicaps...'[44] Holidays were frequent; no time of the year was there a long run of uninterrupted production. Easter, Whit and the Annual Infirmary Sports were all opportunities for time off work. It was claimed that shoe hands were reluctant to take holidays of less than a full week's duration, regardless of the expense. August Bank Holiday thus became in the 1880s a major annual holiday week, a trend paralleled in the hosiery industry. Pawnbrokers were said to do particularly well at the end of a fine Whit week, and in any case 'the workmen here during holiday times invariably run the length of their pecuniary tether before they consent to put themselves in the traces again...'[45]

Employers undertook various initiatives to try to exert control over workplace culture. The indoor working campaign led to plans by

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43. SLR, 5.6.86.

44. Ibid., 1.11.90.

45. Ibid., 17.7.86; 27.12.95; 19.6.86; 31.5.90. Hosiery Review 20.8.90.

manufacturers for locking workers into the factories, a move which was greatly resented. A public meeting at the Temperance Hall attended by 3,000 workers in 1891 demanded that no such practice took place, and no mention was made of it in the Indoor Working Agreement with NUBSO. Nevertheless, there was a report in April 1892 of 'grumbling' about locking in and attempts to put an end to the practice of 'taking air'. Inskip refused to take the side of the protestors at another mass meeting, although as has been demonstrated, his position remained a guarded one.

In some cases, employers no doubt tried to dismiss individuals whose work patterns were not to their liking, but fear of precipitating unrest, and the very strength of the old customs, are likely to have inhibited them. When T. Lawrence and Co. sacked an employee who 'used to go on the drink for a week at a time, and who prior to his discharge, chased a boy all over the factory with a knife', a strike resulted.[46]

It was not until after 1895 that the rapid spread of mechanisation in the face of American competition, and following the defeat of NUBSO in the lock out of that year, that manufacturers as a body began determinedly to fight established practices. Even then, their ability to do so was inhibited by the fact that, until 1907, endemic seasonality and bad trade meant heavy reliance on short-time working and frequent holidays to match production to demand. Evidence abounds in the Shoe and Leather Record of both.[47]

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46. SLR 1.8.93.

47. Examples of short time working and additional holidays include

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Oct. | 1886 | Only 6 of over 250 firms 'very busy' |
| Oct. | 1887 | Some factories on 2 or 3 day week |
| Nov. | 1888 | Most factories on 4 hour day |
| Dec. | 1888 | Many closed by December 15 for the rest of the year. |
| Sept. | 1893 | Most workforces reduced and on 34 hour week |
| July | 1895 | A large factory on a 27 hour week |
| March | 1896 | Clickers given an unprecedented ½-day holiday for the time of year. |

Source: SLR

When it suited them, manufacturers were happy to give holidays which at other times they deplored. In 1894, a Belgrave manufacturer was quoted as saying 'Thank goodness ... it is Belgrave Wake next week, which will give us an excuse for closing our factory for four or five days'. While the Infirmary Sports in 1898 was seized as an opportunity to give a half or whole day's holiday. In the light of such opportunism, it seems hypocritical of the Shoe and Leather Record to denounce the attitude of the shoe hands of whom it said that

> When business is slack they are very humble and suppliant; but directly the demand for labour exceeds the supply, they are as independent as they are undependable, and the amount of "fresh air" they require is enormous...[47a]

Bad trade after 1895 led manufacturers to change their attitude to holidays, or so the Shoe and Leather Record thought. While some still opposed the full week's holiday at August Bank Holiday, few now tried to reopen before the following Monday, so there were fewer complaints of indiscipline in returning to work. In any case, 'the August holiday falls at a time when most employers in the shoe trade can afford to shut down for the week with advantage to themselves and to their workpeople'.

Such pragmatic compromise, parallel to the acceptance of Wakes weeks by Lancashire manufacturers, underlies the development after 1905 of a pattern of work and leisure more appropriate to a mature factory system.[48] Better trade was a basis for fuller employment in which the

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47a. SLR 13.7.94; 9.3.89.

48. Ibid., 5.8.98. On wakes, see John Walton and Robert Poole, 'The Lancs. Wakes in the 19th Century' in Storch (ed.), op.cit.

52½ hour week was more regularly achieved. In the interim, workers' own preferences had changed, partly due to the traumatising effect of underemployment and to the spread of machinery requiring more regular operation. In 1905, a 54 hour week was widespread in the spring, although the weakness of demand later in the year undermined NUBSO's demand for a 48 hour week.[49]

The union had sought to reduce the 'normal' working week in 1894 as a response to seasonal demand. Its 1894 conference resolved that 'no member shall work overtime systematically, this being directed against those members who leave one shop and go to another after finishing their ordinary day's work...'. It reiterated the necessity of procuring the eight hour day or 48 hour week. These demands coincided with the American invasion of the British boot and shoe market which, together with further mechanisation, both encouraged the union to try to control output at the same time as weakening its power to do so. The severe defeat inflicted on the union in 1895 put off any further serious discussion of the eight hour day for a decade, and the limited gains won at the 1896 arbitration conference, making overtime chargeable at time and a quarter at certain times of the year reflects the union's weakness. It seems, though, that some of the worst effects of seasonal demand were mitigated by firms operating work-sharing schemes on their own initiative, perhaps in the interest of maintaining a more stable workforce. A 1901 Monthly Report of the Union stated that

> The wholesale discharge of workmen in the slack seasons, which used to be the order of the day, does not now obtain, most of the workpeople being allowed an opportunity of earning some little to take home...[50]

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49. SLR 12.5.1905; 24.11.1905.

50. Alan Fox, A History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives 1847-1957 (Oxford 1958) pp.277-78.

With the upturn in trade in 1907, the 48 hour week again became a principle issue throughout the industry. By January 1909, some firms had already reduced the working week to between 49 and 53 hours, but the national settlement of the same month only reduced the maximum week to 52½ hours. Given the concern for work sharing and output restriction in the previous ten years, it is quite likely that the union was acting as Bienefeld suggests is usual, seeking in good times to reduce hours, increasing security in the face of future depressions, as well as raising wages in the short term. Yet despite the 'Victory of the British Boot', as the Economist described the revival of fortunes in the industry in 1913, the 48 hour week was not achieved until the time of the post-war boom.

viii. The Early Closing Association: hours and the lower middle class

One group of workers for whom the question of hours was always salient, and associated at least in the minds of their apologists with the desirability of increasing time available for recreation, was shop assistants. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that shops were open for such long hours, to 8 or 9 o'clock most nights and as late as midnight on Saturday at the beginning of the period. After closing, anything between 1½ and three hours work might remain in restocking and clearing up.[51] During the period, two successive Early Closing Associations were formed to campaign against long hours, with limited success.

On the afternoon of Good Friday, April 1850, a meeting was held at the New Hall, attended by 400 people to launch the older of the two organisations. The time of the meeting, its setting, with flower-decorated

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51. William Smeeton and Harry J. Davis, The Necessity of Early Closing to Self-culture. Two Essays (Leicester 1855) p.8. LC 6.4.1850. The committee of the ECA found the following numbers of shops open at the stated times on Saturday, September 20, 1856:

| | |
|---|---|
| 10 pm | 782 |
| 11 pm | 561 |
| 12 pm | 253 |

LC 4.10.56.
The sample was taken from 21 selected streets, which are not named.

tables and banners inscribed with mottoes such as 'Ladies, never shop after six', tea beforehand and musical offerings afterwards, all point to the middle class tone and composition of the association. Like the first such association, formed in London in 1842 on the initiative of Sir John Lubbock, the Leicester Early Closing Association was voluntarist in its method and philanthropic in intent. Meetings, including both business meetings and social occasions, were at intended by notables who occupied the platform, drawn from the clergy, large shopkeepers, professionals and hosiery industry alike and several councillors and mayors, such as E.S. Ellis, Dr. Noble, J.F. Hollings and George Toller.[52] (See Table 1.1). Their motives varied: there was a strong Sabbatarian element in the clergy's support, and they may have shared Hollings's concern that late Saturday hours deprived the churches and chapels of an important source of Sunday school teachers. Borough medical officials among the professional group, such as Lankester and the Officer of Health, Dr. Crane, may have attended out of concern for the health of shopworkers, or a sense that they were expected to show concern. The hosiers, several of whom were inevitably involved in philanthropy as a result of their economic and social standing in the town, may have seen in the Early Closing Association a further means of trying to regulate the habits of their workpeople, since several ECA speeches were agreed that most late shoppers were from the working class.[53] For shopkeepers, early

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52. LC 6.4.50. P.C. Hoffmann, They Also Serve (1949) on shopworkers' unions.

53. e.g. 'Need they wonder at the scarcity of teachers at Sunday Schools?' LC 4.10.56. See also D. Merrick in LC 10.8.72.

Table 1.1:

Occupations of Supporters of the Early Closing Association

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | grocers | 4 |
| | clothing | 2 |
| | wine merchant | 1 |
| | bookseller | 1 |
| | SHOPKEEPERS | 8 |
| | solicitors | 3 |
| | doctors | 3 |
| | PROFESSIONS | 6 |
| Clergy: | Baptists | 2 |
| | Unitarian | 1 |
| | other Noncon | 2 |
| | C of E | 1 |
| | no denom. | 2 |
| | | 8 |
| | HOSIERY MANUFS. | 7 |
| | Total | 29 |
| | Unidentified | 7 |

Sources: Leicester Chronicle; Directories.

closing represented a reduction in costs, since it saved gas, if not wages. Those shops which relied least on working-class custom could thus gain directly by closing earlier, since they had less late business to lose. In any case concern for their employers' welfare was relatively cheap and might bring valuable contact with the wealthier bourgeoisie.

Several speakers at ECA meetings drew attention to the wider interests involved. The Rev. J.P. Mursell, a baptist, thought that

> the system of long hours and converting men into mere machines took away their self-respect, militated against the proper feeling which should exist in the employed towards their employers, and rendered their services unwilling and worthless...

Support for early closing, and then for the half-holiday movement, on the other hand, provided an opportunity to reforge social bonds, rather in the spirit of political reform of 1867. The Rev. J.N. Bennie noted 'as a pleasing characteristic of the local movement that it proceeded not only from the employed but from the employers equally...'. It showed

> the vast importance of the great questions relative to capital and labour being speedily settled by the exercise of mutual forebearance on the part of capitalists and those whose labour was their only capital.[54]

As befits such a society, the methods advocated denied the use of coercion. Exclusive dealing was specifically ruled out, as was any suggestion of offending those shopkeepers who did not join the campaign or close earlier. Moral persuasion, at times backed up by lurid accounts of the effect of long hours on the young men, was aimed at employers, but as often at women shoppers. The ECA thus managed to deflect much cricitism onto the consumer, whether female or working class, and away from fellow businessmen. Much late shopping resulted from the consequence of payment of workers on Saturday afternoon. E.S. Ellis encouraged fellow employers to follow the example of R. Harris and Sons and pay wages on Friday, as his firms were now to do. But such practical response was rare.

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54. LC 6.4.50; 8.7.68.

Deputations of members of the ECA visited shopkeepers, encouraging them to close early, getting a good response from drapers but little from ironmongers, grocers or druggists. It was always possible for shopkeepers to plead that while they would willingly close if everyone else did, they could not afford to give such an advantage to their less righteous rivals.[54a]

Just as prominent a theme in ECA speeches was the importance of shopworkers showing that they were capable of using their increased leisure well. The image of the dissolute young men wasting time and money in public houses was regularly brought out, either because this was already a problem which it was thought could get worse, or as a means of furthering discipline over shopworkers in the present, and requiring greater diligence from them in future if they were to show themselves worthy of better treatment. In order to encourage thoughts about the best use of recreation, the ECA sponsored an essay competition in 1854, the prizes books worth two guineas and one guinea, to be adjudicated by Rev. E.T. Vaughan and Rev. T. Lomas. Their choice was for William Smeeton's 'The Necessity of Early Closing for Self-Culture', while second prize went to Harry J. Davis's 'The Three Brothers', which showed the benefits of self-culture in fictional form. Smeeton's essay is as clear a statement as any of the ECA's views, dwelling on the benefits which extra spare time would bring to both the religious and intellectual life of shop assistants and on the dangers of injuring the health of the nation's future tradesmen. Both Smeeton and patrons such as Hollings pointed to the increasing availability of wholesome pastimes for young men, at Mechanics' Institutes, Libraries,

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54a. LC 4.10.56; 6.4.50.

Museums and bookshops, Smeeton did not hesitate to play on the danger of threats to social order in describing the need for such education which

> combined with the religious advantages which we possess, will prove more effective to remove discontent, and prevents riot and anarchy, than any government regulations or mad schemes of socialist reformers.

Having put his case, Smeeton concluded with a warning to his fellow workers that

> You may rest assured that they will never be favourable to [early closing] if your leisure hours are spent foolishly. You are better in the shop than in the tavern; and in the former you will be kept, if you are not able to take proper care of yourself when out of it.[54b]

While some speakers celebrated the town's growing facilities for rational recreation, others dwelt on the need to extend them. An editorial in the Leicester Chronicle held up the newly formed St. Martin's Young Men's Institute as an example, adding that many shopkeepers allowed time off for assistants to attend its lectures. The ECA sponsored its own lectures, but these were not always successful, as when the Rev. E.T. Vaughan lectured to a thin audience on the benefits of Euclidian geometry and membership of the Young Men's Institute. In London, the movement had been important in the foundation of the YMCA, as the Secretary of the London ECA, Lilwall, informed the Leicester Association, and it is likely that the movement was important in the development of education in the town, especially through the efforts of the Rev. D. Vaughan.[55]

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54b. Smeeton and Davis, op.cit., pp.9, 14-15.

55. LC 13.12.51; 21.1.54; 13.12.51. On Vaughan and the Working Men's College, see below, ch. 7.

The most tangible achievement of this first ECA came in 1868, when its members and methods were influential in obtaining Thursday half-day closing (at 2pm). Some of its proponents drew comparison with the half day which factory workers enjoyed on Saturdays, but economics probably had as much influence as a sense of fair play. By Thursday afternoon, business must have been at its lowest ebb before the new pay day, and shopkeepers had little to lose, and smaller gas bills, to gain, from the gesture. Nevertheless, it was at first voluntary, limited to about 150 shops, but in September of the same year, the council introduced a by-law confirming the half-holiday. The Chronicle was hopeful for the results, expecting a good use of the free afternoon:

> In the summer, the country walk, the volunteer drill, the railway excursion, will be popular; in the winter ... books, respectable society, and legitimate indoor pastime will be resorted to very generally.[56]

A group of traders, whose shops were all in very central locations in the Market Square or in immediately adjacent streets, established traders catering for wealthier customers, bought space in the press to publicise their view that it would be better to close every day, except Saturday, at 7pm than to introduce the half day, although they do not say why. (Table 1.2). It may be that their stance resulted from the balance of their daily takings and costs.

While the Thursday half-holiday seems to have taken care of the early closing issue as far as the original ECA and its patrons were concerned, shop assistants were not contented. During the period of improvements in hours and wages in the town in 1872, the ECA was reformed and a demand for 6pm closing put forward. One of its members, a Mr. Austin, told

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56. LC 8.8.68; 5.9.68.

Table 1.2:

Shopkeepers opposed to Half-day closing in 1868

| Name | Trade | Address |
|---|---|---|
| B.H. Jackson | draper | 37, Gallowtree Gate |
| Henry Kemp | draper | 11, 15, Market Place |
| Richard Wright | hatter | 3, High Street |
| W. Baines and Son | hatter | 32, Market Place |
| Robert Robins | fancy draper | 42, Market Place |
| J. Smithers | fancy draper | 2, Granby Street |
| Hunt and Pickering | ironmongers | 14, Gallowtree Gate & Churchgate |
| Cort and Paul | ironmongers | Market Place and 1, Hotel Street |
| J. Sarson | grocer | 11, Hotel Street |
| Samuel Baines | grocer | Belvoir Street and Market Place |
| J. & T. Spencer | bookseller | 20, Market Place |
| Vice and Moon | bookseller | 36, Market Place |
| H.S. Jones | jeweller | 9, Market Place |
| Isaac Wilkins | jeweller | - |
| Bourden and Swingler | woollen draper | 15, Hotel Street |
| G.A. Harrold | woollen draper | 19, Gallowtree Gate |

Sources: Leicester Chronicle; Trade Protection Association Directory, 1870.

a meeting held in the Temperance Hall in 1872 that the association had been in existence for three months, suggesting that, even though the same name was used, there was no intention of establishing continuity with the old association, which he did not even mention, and which had presumably ceased to exist by this time. The new association, while its meetings were still chaired by manufacturers and shopkeepers, lacked most of the trappings of a philanthropic organisation. While some still urged the need for recreational facilities and moderation, more militant voices were raised; Austin spoke of the need to 'get all the assistants to join in carrying on the agitation', and another speaker, A. Adderley,

stressed the need to deal with employers direct, rather than to rely on the manipulation of public opinion. It was also necessary to organise regular subscriptions and shop collections. A mass meeting was held in the Market Place - a tactic inconceivable in the earlier association - and addressed, in admittedly fairly moderate terms, by Daniel Merrick.[58] The greater willingness to resort to the forms of protest associated with manual workers anticipates the formation of the National Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks at Birmingham in 1891, formed from a meeting of 11 half-holiday and early closing associations. Neither Leicester's new ECA, nor the national union, were successful in obtaining general reductions in hours, and there was no new legislation until 1928.[59] Any improvements before then were due to individual employers responding to changing habits among consumers as working hours in general changed.

The greater degree of organisation and independence of the new association may in part have resulted from the changing pattern of recruitment into shopkeeping, made more attractive by improved conditions and, in a growing sector of the local economy, by better prospects. As the chairman, M.H. Deacon, who was a draper, told a Temperance Hall meeting in 1872, 'Half holidays and shorter hours of labour brought a far better and more respectable class of young men into the business'.[60] But their desire for respectability and personal advancement, made easier by the growth of adult education, were hardly guarantees of a continued commitment to collective action.

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58. LC 1.6.72; 29.6.72. Daniel Merrick claimed that 'Late shopping was mainly due to the purchases of young ladies'. LC 10.8.72.

59. Hoffman, op.cit.

60. LC 1.6.72.

## B. Treats for workpeople. factory paternalism and recreation

### i. Introduction

The development of large-scale industrial enterprises in which large numbers of workers were gathered together presented employers with acute problems of labour discipline in the early stages of factory production. At issue were both technical problems of management, concerning logistics and the smooth running of production processes made more complicated by the further division of labour, and the social question of the legitimacy of authority and the distribution of wealth on which that authority rested. Factory production at once denied close personal supervision of labour by entrepreneurs and demanded more regular, and often more precise, work. The workers' scope for reducing the efficiency of the firm, through bad time-keeping or carelessness with increasingly valuable machinery, increased at the same time as alienation from the work process grew. One set of responses by employers was to seek to attach workers to the firm by developing pseudo-paternalistic relationships, manifested in benefit clubs, domestic visiting, care for old workers and a range of almost ritualistic displays centring on excursions, holidays and celebrations of major events in the history of the firm and the lives of its ruling family. Consideration of these recreational aspects of factory paternalism constitutes the subject of this section.

Sidney Pollard saw such feasts and holidays as backward-looking, typical of the old order of landed society, attempting to establish relationships of an almost feudal nature, based on awed respect for territorial magnates who embodied the sum of local power. Such relations, according to Pollard, typified the first stages of factory production, from the 1770s on, as exemplified at New Lanark, Cromford and Belper, and were

short-lived. Within a generation, Pollard says, 'it was the shareholders that were being feasted, not the workers'. Yet as Pat Joyce shows, a paternalistic factory culture, far from being abandoned for good in 1800, was developed in Lancashire cotton towns during the half century up to 1880. Nor did it have the spradic nature which Pollard attributes to it for the earlier period.

In Joyce's view, the hegemony of the factory system rested on the establishment of a communal identity with the firm, showing itself in political allegiances and an almost unquestioning acceptance of the legitimacy of the social system - or at least of its inevitability. Provision of economic security almost regardless of the strictness of their regime, could ensure for successful entrepreneurs the closely felt allegiance of their workforce.

Ritualistic display both acknowledged and reinforced dependence, and by stressing the importance of the family at the head of the firm, provided an image of shared interests. The paternalistic cotton manufacturer acted as an economic Leviathan, protecting his subjects from the worst of the anarchy of the free-market economy, but at the same time able to use it as an implied threat to any who questioned his authority. Moreover, by opposing radical alternatives to the market - such as co-operative production and trade unionism - the employer maintained the system of production whose vicissitudes allowed him to legitimise his paternalistic role. Display was important as a reaffirmation of the workforce's belief in the employer's power. As Joyce observes, 'What made paternalism so effective was the employers' capacity for defining and thus delimiting the social outlook of the workforce'.[61] Status within

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61. Patrick Joyce, Work, Society and Politics (1980) p.xxi. Sidney Pollard, The Genesis of Modern Management (1965) p.182.

the workplace had validity beyond the factory gates in communities which were close-knit geographically and by kinship. Celebrations of rank, such as foremen's outings and recognition of long service, were means by which status was given ceremonial support.

Joyce is clear that hegemony was negotiated, not imposed. Despite the ambition of firms and employers to extend their authority to the whole life of the communities in which they operated, the nature of a market economy, especially in towns where there were several employers, unlike the industrial villages of an earlier stage of industrial development, meant that factory Lancashire wasn't the site of a paternalism of the intensity of that described by Genovese in the ante-bellum South. Lancashire cotton magnates may have aspired to the slaveholders' 'ability to confine the attendant struggles to terrain acceptable to the ruling class - to prevent the emergence of an effective challenge to the basis of society in slave property' but bourgeois property relations ultimately precluded such an all-embracing paternalism. Genovese distinguishes between the two sets of social relations, and concludes that under the so-called paternalism of industrial societies such as 19th century Britain 'the exigencies of marketplace competition, not to mention the subsequent rise of trade union opposition, reduced these efforts to impediments to the central tendency towards depersonalisation....'[62] Joyce acknowledges the conditional nature of the hegemony of the order of the factory, but describes its strength beyond the middle of the 19th century, and suggests

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62. Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll (New York 1972) pp.658ff, 662.

that it was far more effective than Genovese suggests. Only after 1880 did changes in company structure, working-class organisation and features of social life such as transport and commercial leisure undermine the culture of the factory.

Without entering into discussion of the accuracy of Joyce's portrayal of factory culture in Ashton, Stalybridge and Blackburn, or its representativeness of either Lancashire or British society as a whole, it is intended here to use Joyce's analysis as a model by which to evaluate the activities of Leicester's employers in promoting works outings and feasts between 1850 and 1890. At this time, Leicester's industrial structure was much more akin to Joyce's description of W. Yorkshire, where late incorporation of adult male workers into the factory system did not provide a basis for the factory culture observed in Lancashire. Indeed, it may be argued that Leicester, where boot and shoes were still in part produced by outworkers up to the mid-1890s, presents a still more extreme case of 'primitive' industrial organisation, though not one atypical of the economy as a whole. Yet some Leicester industries - worsted spinning and the elastic web trade, as well as the indoor hosiery trade and, later the better paid boot and shoe processes - were concentrated in factories, and some of the largest employers, most notably Corahs, pursued paternalistic policies. Given this uneven development, it remains to be seen what were the implications for attempts to develop a factory culture, and how the activities involved related to the culture of the working class and of the town as a whole. Moreover, the particular problems of work discipline in a population of outworkers had been largely solved in Lancashire by 1830, yet remained salient in Leicester for sixty years

longer. It is a matter for inquiry how far factory treats in Leicester were seen as a response to these persisting issues of social discipline.[63]

This study is based largely on reports of treats for workpeople to be found in the local press. A list has been compiled of all the entries in every fifth year in the Leicester Chronicle (See Appendix I.1, I.4). Press coverage was incomplete. What made a treat newsworthy is impossible to say - it may have depended on the demand for copy, on receiving a report from a firm, or on the presence of a journalist from the Chronicle. J.F. Hollings, its editor, was present on a number of occasions. Few firms appear more than once in the list, yet internal evidence reveals that some employers' treats were annual events. That of Messrs. Wheeler and Co.'s Abbey Mills in 1858 was the seventh annual holiday yet there is no mention of the second in 1853. Brewin and Whetstone's holiday in 1853 was to be the first of an annual event, but no others are listed.[64] It is likely too that such treats were much bigger news when they began in the 1850s than in the 1880s, by which time they were frequent occurrences, and there is a possibility that the under-reporting increases as time goes on. Nevertheless, other evidence suggests that some features of the tables, the types of firms listed, the destination of trips and the decline after 1883, may not be fictions due to the nature of the sources.

Employers' treats established themselves in Leicester during the 1850s. The first one which can be dated is that of the Abbey Mills in 1852, although it is not clear that this was the very first. As the owner, Wheeler, said in 1858,

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63. On 'combined and uneven development' see Raphael Samuel, 'The Workshop of the World', HWJ 3 Spring 1977. The house history of Corah's is C.W. Webb, Corahs of Leicester (Leicester 1947).

64. LC 6.8.58; 27.8.53.

> When we held our first, these meetings were comparatively unknown. Others followed our example, and now they are so extensively adopted as to become the rule and not the exception.

Joseph Dare reported in autumn 1852 that several employers had given their hands 'rural treats' the previous summer, implying that they were a noteworthy new venture. By the following year, the Chronicle reported that employers' treats were not now rare occurrences, and that 'We have frequently had pleasure in giving publicity to accounts of similar gatherings, originated by the leading manufacturers of the town and neighbourhood'.[65] In 1859, Dare described such occasions as 'one of the facts of the times'. It seems then, that within a very short time, this new type of recreation was a regular occurrence among the larger firms. The chronology is similar to that suggested by Joyce for Lancashire, where trips were popular in Preston from 1850 and in Blackburn from 1852. The Leicester employers were aware of changing practices in labour discipline and factory organisation in Lancashire, and may have been inspired by their example in this instance. Joyce links the growth of factory excursions to the opening of railways in each case, but there seems no reason to make such an association, certainly not in Leicester where, despite the existence of railways from 1832, and Cook's flourishing excursion trade, the early factory outings did not use trains.

Certain broad trends are suggested, though not firmly established, by the data in Table 1.2. At first, factory treats were undertaken by the largest employers, some of whom, such as Corah and Whetstone, had reputations for personal supervision of their businesses and provision

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65. Ibid. LJ, 6.8.58; LDM 1852, p.12.

of other welfare benefits. Hosiery warehouses (not outworkers) and factory trades such as spinning and elastic web weaving provided the largest number of treats before 1870. The absence of any evidence from 1858 may be due to the extremely bad trade of that year, in which according to Dare, the biggest firms did their utmost just to keep their employees in work.[66] The relative decline by 1873 may be a consequence of disillusion with treats as a means of stimulating rational recreation, and the revival of numbers after then includes a wider variety of trades including more small enterprises, such as building firms, for whom the building boom of the 1880s provided surpluses to pay for treats - and problems of strikes which encouraged the search for better relations with employees. By the late 1880s, employers' treats had either been abandoned or were no longer at all noteworthy, except in unusual cases such as Corahs, one of the few Leicester hosiery firms which survived from mid-century and remained in the town rather than moving to neighbouring villages.

ii. Forms of Employers' Treats

All the forms of factory ceremonial listed by Joyce can be identified in Leicester, except for the celebration of the political success of employers.[67] Yet the evidence does not give the impression of all-embracingness which he identifies in Lancashire. Treats and celebrations seem always to retain some aspect of the extraordinary, as though they represent attempts to establish new forms of recreation rather than confirming that they already existed. Because of the patchy nature of the reporting, there is little sign of the coherence which Joyce sees in this aspect

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66. Ibid, 1858.

67. Joyce, op.cit., pp.179ff.

of factory culture. Nor is there support for his interpretation of the ritual nature of factory social life, in which excursions and treats allowed for elements of inversion ritual. The events were set in rigid forms, which confirmed their hierarchical origins while using the banners, bands and marches of popular radical tradition as the basis for providing enjoyment to the participants. But it is unfortunate that the conventions of press reporting emphasise the formal elements at the expense of giving any real indication of the participants' feelings. There is a danger of assuming that the display was read by the employees wholly according to the intentions of the employers, something which does not hold for other aspects of rational recreation.

Although there are some examples of treats consisting only of a dinner followed by speeches and singing, the great majority were holidays involving time off work. Since the conventions of dinners and speeches were the same in each case, the former need not be discussed separately. Such dinners were typical either of small enterprises, or of presentations for long-serving workmen. The most popular day for holidays was Friday, coming at the end of the week but not interfering with workers' shopping. It is not clear whether Saturday morning was then allowed off as time to recover. Joseph Dare describes a works outing to Kenilworth in 1863 after which all the hands were at work on time the following morning, but he presents that as a model case. He warns against the apparently more numerous cases of poorly supervised outings which ended in 'a mere riotous debauch, or is continued in the town for many days, to the neglect of employment, self-degradation, and the privation of helpless dependents'.[68]

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68. LDM 1864, p.8.

Certainly, the choice of Friday would reduce the disruption to routine. The other popular choices, Monday and Saturday had similar advantages. A holiday on Saturday was effectively only an extra half-day's free time in Leicester factories, while providing rational recreation on Monday could both serve as a model of behaviour to St. Mondayites and make the best of absenteeism on that day. It is striking that few employers provided treats on Bank Holidays and none tried to provide counter-attractions to popular holidays in Whit Week, Race Week or during the May and October Fairs. Employers were not so sure of the dominance of social life by work to risk such a test of their influence over popular culture.

Holidays occurred either as annual treats in their own right, or as celebrations of major events in the life of the firm, notably the opening of new buildings, or its ruling family. In addition, major national events, such as the Royal Wedding of 1863, were marked by leading firms with decorations, feasts and processions in the town. The holidays took three main forms: factory feasts, visits to employers' residences and excursions proper.

Factory feasts were the most appropriate way of inaugurating new premises. Evans and Stafford marked the opening of their new cigar warehouse in this way in 1858, a dinner for 160 in the afternoon being followed by a band and dancing in the evening, with speeches by the employers. Corahs held several such celebrations, not least that in December 1886, at which nearly 2,000 were present. Allusions were usually made on such occasions to the desirability of workers associating their place of work with pleasure as well as toil. There are also examples of factory feasts to celebrate a son's wedding and as the annual holiday. The Abbey Mills feast of 1858 celebrated the firm's success, its role in the town's economy and social life, and its munificence to its workpeople and the poor of

the town. The gardens in front of the factory in the Belgrave Road were decorated, national flags flew from the building and mottoes such as 'Unity' and 'Long Live our noble employers' were hung about. The guests present included the Mayor and several councillors, as well as several ladies 'with their characteristic kindness and effective services...',[69] who presumably mingled patronisingly with the workpeople. 270 sat down to dinner, and toasts and speeches celebrated the Queen, Wheeler and his family, the partners, the Mayor and JPs, the company and the gentlemen visitors. Wheeler presented the works manager with a portrait of himself [i.e. Wheeler] as a reward for good service, to the latter's delight, and there was a toast to the doctor, Lankester, as surgeon of the works sick club. Special mention was made of Wheeler's efforts to keep his employees in work during the previous hard winter, and of his philanthropy in feeding the poor, including large numbers of children who had no connection with the works. Dancing followed until 6pm, to music by the Leicestershire Militia Band (there was no works band) followed by tea, photographs of the grounds by Firth of Granby Street and further dancing. Despite the presence of leading temperance supporters, including Lankester and Hollings, there was drinking 'with no other restriction than the good sense of the company'.

But despite the appropriateness of marking the role of the firm in urban society in this way, the works itself was usually only the starting point for the holiday. The factory was still decorated, but the workers would now process in convoy through the streets en route to their employer's home, the railway station or, most often, to a rural site such as Bradgate Park or Woodhouse Eaves. The wagons, decorated with flowers, banners

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69. LJ 10.1.74; 6.8.58.

and class-conciliatory mottoes must have brought the firm further recognition, as did the 17 carriages driving Corah's workers from the Granby Street warehouse to Scraptoft led by the militia band in 1857 or the 30 vehicles of Brewin and Whetstone on the way to Bradgate in 1853, which impressed villagers along the way. Travel by rail offered little such opportunity for display, and few holidays went by rail.[70] Moreover, trips to urban destinations, whether the Crystal Palace or Skegness, offered less opportunity for control of events and for the formal ceremonies. Indeed, there were no trips to Skegness before the 1880s in the sample and few to destinations outside Charnwood Forest.

As Pollard observes, the whole business of feasts and holidays was essentially backward looking, in so far as it sought to use the forms of display appropriate to the landed gentry. Leicester employers approached closest to this when they could mount impressive at-homes for their workpeople. In a sense, factory feasts substituted the factory for the great house, and rural excursions took the workers to broad acres even if they were not the property of the employer. Few employers were in a position to do this on any scale, and Corah's reception for c.100 warehouse staff at Scraptoft Hall to mark his son's 21st birthday is without parallel in the sample.[71]

iii. Bradgate Park

By far the most popular destination for outings was Charnwood Forest, some 6-10 miles north of the town, and in particular Bradgate Park, the property of the Earl of Stamford and Warrington. By examining the attractions

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70. LC 6.6.57; 27.8.53.

71. LC 18.6.53.

of the park in the mid-nineteenth century, it is possible to gain some insight into the motives of the employers in promoting such excursions, the attractions which the trips had for workpeople, and some of the conflicts which are hidden in the newspaper reports.

Bradgate Park, home of the Grey family, including Lady Jane Grey, had been used by the Earls of Stamford as a hunting estate only since the early eighteenth century. The great house had been allowed to fall into ruins and had been extensively pillaged for stone. The earls lived at Enville in Staffordshire most of the year. By the early nineteenth century, the Park had become a fashionable resort for coach parties from Leicester and from the 1840s cheap guide books were published, suggesting a broadening of its appeal. The attractions which such guides listed emphasised the scenic grandeur of this the highest part of an unsublimely flat county, and the historical remains, with the ruined mansion and association with the executed queen. 'A Ramble to Bradgate Park' recalled how

> There is nothing better calculated to dispell the dull monotony of our every-day existence, than a day of relaxation, in order to visit those places which recall to memory the warmest sympathies, when history presents to our view the scenes which have occurred upon the spots now rich in ruined grandeur, and remaining only as monuments of bygone magnificence.

It drew attention to the 'romantic places' along the road from Leicester, the Abbey, St. Leonard's churchyard and Kirby Muxloe Castle, as well as the technological marvel of the Leicester Frith railway tunnel. In 1852, Joseph Dare also ranked the magnificent scenery of the Park as a great benefit to visitors, and listed its availability along with excursions, tea meetings and the Temperance Society as among the increasing number of benefits to be had by the working classes. Yet he regretted that such things were above the means and taste of the very poor who 'lack the intelligence to enjoy anything rational'. The attraction of Bradgate

for Dare was that it provided the setting for 'rural fetes', as he called works outings. The countryside was good for the body and the spirit, since a day trip 'cheers the heart and lightens its labours for a whole year afterwards'. Visiting the Park may have stimulated interest in rational pursuits which Dare was anxious to promote, such as botany. But the real attraction of rural outings for Dare was that they provided an opportunity for friendly gathering of employers and workers, the rural setting allowed them to get away from the dismal environment in which they lived and in which he conducted his mission work.[72]

Some workers may well have appreciated the opportunity to ramble over ruins, be inspired by the scenery and botanise. Descriptions of outings to Bradgate usually suggest that time was allowed for exploring and visiting beauty spots such as Little Matlock and the folly Old John. For many, the open space, although not difficult to reach at any time in a geographically small town like Leicester in the mid-nineteenth century, must have been a major attraction. Certainly picnicking on the grass was not a likely pursuit in the marshy, insanitary Pasture which was the playground for many of Leicester's working class. But outings were structured around other activities. There was usually a tea provided by local publicans or Leicester caterers followed by speeches thanking the benefactors. The bigger outings had bands with them; Brewin and Whetstone took two in 1853[73] and there were invariably sports in the afternoon, most often races and cricket, for which prizes might be presented, and dancing in the early evening. Most parties left between 7 and 8,

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72. Temple Patterson, op.cit., p.174. A Ramble through Bradgate Park (Leicester nd). LDM 1852, 1856, 1869.

73. LC 27.8.53.

returning to Leicester at 9 or 10. The programme was not very different from factory-based feasts, and there could be the same prominence given to visiting dignitaries. All this, in the presence of up to 500 workers in a party, and sometimes several parties at once must have meant that, while there was enough space to find seclusion, the day would not have centred around Wordsworthian reveries. As Dare reports, many outings could end in excessive drinking, although those reported in detail were often typified by moderation, enforced by devices such as issuing drinks only against tickets, or limiting the amount taken along by suppliers. However many excursionists observed the motto of Brewin and Whetstone's workers that 'our object is innocent amusement' a significant number did not. As early as 1831, long before works outings, the Earl's steward had threatened closure of the park unless unspecified 'gross irregularities' ceased, and the Earl of Stamford in 1878 closed the grounds at Enville due to the depredations of workers on trips from Wolverhampton. Bradgate was closed to the public except for one day a week in 1864, and there were no further works parties there after 1863. Dare expressed dismay, albeit philosophically, when he wrote that

> From the unmanly and reckless conduct of many of those assemblages in chasing the deer, breaking trees, disturbing the game and fish, or fighting amongst themselves, access to the beautiful park at Bradgate has been restricted to only one day in the week during the season for out-door relaxations ... And thus do these poor men unconsciously turn the blessings they might enjoy into curses, polluting the air with blasphemy and staining the green earth with their blood.

In future years, outings went to other destinations in Charnwood Forest, such as Woodhouse Eaves or Beaumanor. Bradgate was still a resort of private trippers, but only in 1887 was it again the site of organised

recreation when the Leicester conductor and impressario, Nicholson, began an annual series of fetes in the ruins, with music and dancing.[74]

iv. The failure of works outings

There seems little reason, on the basis of the evidence from Leicester, to agree with Joyce that by 1870, the new paternalism was the everyday practice of employers, or that 'the warmth and genuineness of operative responses to paternalist overtures cannot be doubted'. Rather, by the mid-1860s, the first enthusiasm of many Leicester employers for works outings had cooled. The debacle in Bradgate Park and the drunkenness witnessed by Dare after many outings suggested that the form of recreation was socially unstable. While there was something of a revival in the late 1870s, works outings do not seem to have been established as a major feature of popular culture in the town. The explanation is to be sought in the local industrial structure. The large number of outworkers and the seasonal nature of the staple industries meant that only a few firms could try to develop the full-blown paternalism of the Lancashire towns. Corah's is a notable exception; the firm's successful marketing policies and refusal to leave Leicester to exploit cheap rural labour in the 1880s ensured a stable labour force with good prospects. Their loyalty was evident during the violence associated with the 1893 hosiery lock-out, when Corah's workers prepared to defend the factory against a violent mob who broke the windows of several other factories. But except in such rare instances, Leicester firms were neither large nor stable enough to establish such loyalty. Some of the leading paternalistically-minded

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74. Ibid.; LJ 19.8.31; LC 10.8.78. LDM 1864; LC 21.7.88.

employers, who practised philanthropy and face-to-face supervision of their enterprises, such as Whetstone and Harris, died in the 1860s without establishing a family tradition of such conduct. Other old-style employers, such as the Biggs's, relied so heavily on outwork that they had little contact with most of their workforce, so that factory paternalism was inappropriate. The new shoe trade reproduced the outwork-based structure of the hosiery industry, while the elastic web trade left Leicester in large measure during the 1870s due to the poor state of its industrial relations - an interesting pointer to the success of its would-be paternalistic employers.[75]

Factory paternalism offered no means of imposing work-discipline on outworkers. The ministrations of the philanthropically-minded at factory feasts can have held little attraction for many of those workers whom employers wished to integrate into factory production, and whose independent habits and resistance to factory discipline lasted into the 1890s. Many employers looked elsewhere in their effort to establish cultural control of the workforce. Some of the most prominent members of the bourgeoisie, such as E.S. Ellis, had nothing to do with factory paternalism, but put their energies into pan-town organisations like the Temperance movement, and into the magistracy and the council. Just as Leicester relied on its council, not on a single individual to provide its parks, so municipal activity came to fill the vacuum left by the failure of most firms' recreational initiatives after the 1870s. Thus it is illuminating that whereas the Royal Wedding of 1863 was marked by firms' holidays and processions of workers from their factories to

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75. Joyce, op.cit., pp.152, 149. LDP 16.2.86. LC 18.1.68.

the Market Square, the royal visit of 1882 was largely a municipal occasion, in which the marching was done by Friendly Societies, the police and the fire brigade, and the Market Place was filled with children from the town's board schools.[76]

This is not to assert that no recreational activity was associated with firms after 1870. The sample of press reports shows that not to have been the case, as do the large number of factory-based cricket teams.[77] But after the initial enthusiasm in the 1850s, few employers saw recreational provision as an answer either to their particular labour relations problems or to the wider issue of order within the town. This was partly because of the rapid growth of the town's population and of new, small firms in the shoe industry from the 1860s on, partly due to the rejection by workers of the ideological content of what was offered to them. Moreover, the form works outings took was specific to a period in which railway excursions were still of limited accessibility to workers; there was in a sense a captive audience. Once incomes and custom encouraged greater mobility, the prospect of a works trip to Woodhouse Eaves may have been less enticing, and certainly less impressive at a time when increasing numbers could afford excursions to London or the coast. The firm could not achieve cultural domination unless it could impress with cultural goods not otherwise available. The diversification of popular entertainment increasingly precluded this.

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76. LC 14.3.63. William Kelly, Royal Progresses and Visits to Leicester (Leicester 1884).

77. LJ 24.1.73.

Works outings may still have continued as welcome release, and may have improved efficiency and welfare, although there is no direct evidence of this. The wholesale exploitation of sport as an aspect of industrial welfare does not seem to have occurred in Leicester until the end of the First World War, when Corah established a works sports association. Sports teams may well have meant more in terms of the social relations of peer groups at work rather than class relations during the late 19th century. If there were factory celebrations, they would be more likely to be part of municipal or national events, developing loyalties wider than that of the single firm. A rare exception is provided by the Leicester Co-operative Hosiery Manufacturing Society, which in 1898 celebrated its coming of age with visits by co-operators to the factory and an excursion to Longcliffe. In their history of the co-operative, two founder members, Blandford and Newell, described how the workpeople

> entered into the full spirit of the celebration, decorating the factory with flags, chields and mottoes, both in the street, in the recreation room, and a large apartment in which manufactured goods were displayed to visitors.

An attempt was made to reclaim for the Labour movement some of the ceremonial trappings earlier appropriated as the outer show of a debased paternalism, and appears curiously old-fashioned, comparable in spirit to some of the movement's other recreational initiatives.[78]

## C. CONCLUSION

The period as a whole saw an evening out of the working week more marked in its effects on social life than the absolute reduction of hours.

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78. Webb op.cit. Thomas Blandford and George Newell, History of the Leicester Co-operative Hosiery Manufacturing Society (Leicester 1898). For the educational and recreational provisions of Leicester co-operatives, see Ch. 7 below.

The major gain for workers in the principal industries was greater security at work, and although cyclical fluctuations remained, seasonal unemployment and excessive overtime seem both to have been reduced. A 52½ hour week prevailed in hosiery factories from the 1850s but only became universal in the boot and shoe industry after 1909. While shop assistants had gained a weekly half-holiday in 1868, evening closing remained at 7pm until after 1918.

There was little organised conflict over hours, which were generally of secondary importance in negotiations between employers and unions, serving to defend wage rates or employment opportunities rather than being treated as desirable in their own right. The Early Closing Association represents a major exception. The technological changes which transformed hosiery and later boot and shoe making were exploited by unions and employers alike, and while unions tried at times to limit production on new machines in order to save jobs, they welcomed the impetus which factory production gave to indoor working, facilitating their own growing influence over the workforce. The largest employers were willing to consent to some regulation of hours and conditions since they increased their advantage over domestic producers and workshops which could only compete through long hours.

Although many framework knitters in mid-century, and boot and shoe workers as late as the 1890s, resented the lost freedom to come and go as they pleased, so that St. Monday survived as long as hand-powered machinery, there was little explicit resistance by trade unions to the changing routine, and it was not an issue around which the labour movement organised. Early attempts to introduce factory discipline in hosiery were of limited success, but employers overcame irregular habits when steam was introduced in hosiery from the 1860s onwards. In part, their

success may have rested on a greater ability to control an increasingly young, female labour force, but it is also likely that the impoverished culture of the framework knitters had little attraction for new generations of workers, for whom acceptance of a more regular working week was a small price to pay for escape from a depressed trade offering very low wages. Nor should it be overlooked that the growth of factory production coincided with high rates of immigration into Leicester. The long decline of old work patterns in hosiery and boots and shoes, is not simply to be equated with the aggressive suppression of a vigorous artisan culture in the interests of greater control of the work process. The market situation of framework knitters under the system of frame-rents and middlemen had offered no real independence, nor had their occupational culture offered time or opportunity for either material or mental advance by the middle of the 19th century. A framework knitter, William Jones, no doubt unusual in that his literacy enabled him to gain extra income from writing and from copying out music, described the claustrophobia arising from a life of extremely long hours interspersed with bouts of hedonistic release in 1845, when he told the parliamentary enquiry that

> I thought I would get away from the stocking frame, and I made several attempts, but I was always obliged to go to it again ... The hands, I think generally do a little more than 12 dozen a week; but they cannot do so much to be comfortable, and to have time for exercise and recreation to keep their health and so on. Both the glove hands and the stocking-makers in general, in Leicester, have become very immoral indeed. They will work till they about kill themselves, for a week; then part of the next week, probably, they will be in the public house, drinking ...[79]

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79. PP 1845 xv p.289.

In the 1890s, quite different views as to the relationship of work and leisure were being articulated. The Leicester Daily Post, reflecting on the effects of the division of labour, which it said produced a routine of tiresome, unfulfilling work, and the seeming need for the town's working class to indulge in what it considered to be rather worthless pleasures on Bank Holidays, suggested that

> the right way to live is at less pressure, and to spread a certain degree of enjoyment over the whole of life, work-time included. Possibly part of the inner meaning of the 8 hours movement lies here. More leisure in the day is certainly needful for most workers, considering the conditions of modern labour.[80]

The article saw release as still unfortunately necessary, but looked forward to a time when it would no longer be so. Yet there is more than a quantitative difference between the escape sought by factory workers on their excursions and at the music hall, and that of framework knitters celebrating St. Monday. The leisure patterns of the former reflect their far greater security as well as their greater disposable incomes. There is little evidence to suggest that the major cultural shift involved owed much to the direct intervention of employers in providing work-based recreational activities.

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80. LDP 7.6.92.

Chapter 2

## The Municipal Authority and Recreational Provision

During the period under study, the Town Council came to provide a wide range of facilities which were intended for popular recreation. As well as the museum, library and parks they included an art gallery (1882), gymnasium (1892), baths and bathing stations, public concerts (1899) and the De Montfort Hall (1913). In addition, the council directly intervened in popular culture through its powers of policing, regulating bill-posting (1871), cinemas (1910), dogs (1907), fairs (1886, 1902), markets, street music, street noise (1880), and bathing (1859) with bye-laws, as well as drink, prostitution and gambling by the application of national legislation.[1]

The bulk of the positive measures taken by the council stem from the reforming, rational recreationist mood of the parliamentary enquiries of the 1830s into popular culture, notably those concerned with drink.[2] The issues identified at that time dominated the legislation of recreation in the 1840s, and, together with concern for sanitation, gave impetus to the parks movement.[3] The radicalism of MPs such as Ewart and Hume found a sympathetic response among some of the bourgeoisie whose power at a local level was established by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 and subsequent individual incorporations. Nevertheless, the permissive nature of the legislation, the lack of significant funding by central

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1. See CM 1. On fairs, see Boase op.cit.
2. SCHC on Public Walks, PP1833, xv; SCHC on Drunkenness, PP 1834, viii; SCHC on Public Libraries, PP 1849, xi.
3. Cunningham, op.cit., p.9. Bailey, op.cit., pp.35ff.

government, and the retrenchment favoured by mid-nineteenth century Liberalism made local authorities reluctant to act except in exceptional circumstances.[4] There was, moreover, a reluctance to pre-empt private philanthropic initiatives. Historians of leisure and local government alike have tended to identify two phases of municipal activity after 1835; that dominated by economy before 1870, and the pursuit of civic pride and 'conspicuous participation' after that date as a moralised capitalism, armed with an Arnoldian belief in education and culture, and informed by the professional radicalism of municipal officers, sought to redeem the city.[5]

Concentration on municipal activities, and especially on the rhetoric which accompanied each inauguration and opening ceremony, has led some writers to exaggerate the coherence of such initiatives. In some cases, a failure to evaluate the impact of new facilities has created a teleology, in which councils have through piecemeal extensions of their authority in the cultural sphere, created an urban culture in their own image.[6] Meller is aware of the failure of rational recreation to engage large sections of the population but still overemphasises the unity of the achievement of the municipal authority in Bristol, and of the elite and the ideology which constituted it. The conclusion that

> By 1914 the development of municipal facilities for the education, recreation and pleasure of citizens had been made into a composite whole, which reformers and planners understood as "urban civilisation" ...

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4. Bailey, op.cit., pp.35ff.

5. John Garrard, Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns, 1830-1880 (Manchester 1983) p.30. Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London (Oxford 1971) p.270. See also E.P. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons (1973) and Meller, op.cit.

6. e.g. Elliott, op.cit.; Jack Simmons, Leicester Past and Present, 2 vols. (1974).

mistakes the more efficient administration of the council's business for a real ordering of popular culture.[7] Moreover, by concentrating on philanthropic and municipal plans, to the exclusion of commercial leisure and the opposition to municipal schemes, Meller produces a model of cultural development which exaggerates order, planning and intention, and accepts the pious language of the march of intellect and civilisation at face value, neglecting the material interests of the protagonists.

Historians of municipal activity in Leicester have portrayed the early part of the period in terms of the conflict between economisers, led by Whetstone, and proponents of civic pride, led by William Biggs.[8] A brief period of expenditure, on the Museum and Cemetary (1849), carried out in the light of fears about Chartism and cholera, was followed by retrenchment, seen in the long wrangle over new municipal buildings and inaction over the library act resolution of 1862. Then, from the 1870s, as in Birmingham, a new spirit prevailed, typified by projects such as the Free Library (1871), Town Hall (1876) and Abbey Park (1882), as well as extensive flood prevention and sewage works. The municipal debt, £247,464 in 1876, increased by ten times in the next twenty years.

It is not possible to attribute this change in the level of municipal activity in any straightforward way to the pattern of recruitment of councillors. Peter Jones identifies a reversal of the relative importance of hosiery and shoe manufacturers on the council before 1881, and observes that smaller businessmen were becoming more numerous than larger manufacturers.[9] At the same time, he identifies a link between the individual

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7. Meller, op.cit., p.120. She comments that 'One of the curious facts about municipal provision for leisure and pleasure was how little their development owed, in most instances, to popular demand'. ibid. p.92. Cf Bailey, op.cit., p.82.

8. Elliott, op.cit., pp.41ff.

9. Peter Jones, 'The Recruitment of Office Holders in Leicester 1861-1931', TLAHS LVIII 1981-2. For details of occupations of councillors, see pp.73-4.

wealth of councillors and their support for municipal largesse. The wealthiest men, such as Edward Wood, Orson Wright and Israel Hart, cultivated an image which was liberal and forward-looking. Small businessmen, publicans and shopkeepers were more parsimonious. That the greater number of small businessmen was not able to limit the activities of the council to a greater extent may be due variously to the personal influence of leading Liberals, to the sub-committee system and to the growth of the number of local government officials. Certainly in the 1860s and '70s Leicester's economic base achieved the stability necessary to support major municipal initiatives. Prior to the 1870s, considerable hope was put in private philanthropy, from individuals or such bodies as the Literary and Philosophical Society or the committee of the Mechanics' Institute. By that date, though, it was apparent that such help was not to be forthcoming. Leicester had neither a resident landowner, comparable to the Butes in Cardiff or the Calthorpes in Birmingham,[11] nor any industrialists wealthy enough to fulfill a paternalistic role on anything but a purely local scale. The council itself could at times be seen as a collective philanthropic body, filling the vacuum and expressing the rhetoric of independence which characterised both its workingclass and bourgeois radicalism in the 1840s, and again in the later 19th century.

In the 1840s, William Biggs had sought to exploit the fears aroused by Chartism and the framework knitters' agitation, as well as the European revolutions, when he took the opportunity of the opening of the museum in 1849 to propound his view of the role of local government. He held that

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10. Elliott, op.cit., p.141.

11. See David Cannadine, Lords and Landowners: the Aristocracy and the Towns 1774-1967 (Leicester, 1980) and (ed.), Patricians, Power and Politics in 19th century towns (Leicester 1982).

> as far as the law allows, the governing body ought to be paternal as well as protective; it ought to promote health, encourage taste, promote recreation, and by every mode and appliance at its command do all and everything that can advance, or raise, the public taste, and improve the public morals, and leave the world better than it found it.[12]

Education, in the broad sense, was the best guarantee of public safety; the alternative was the 'anarchy of the barricades of Paris' or the despotism of Russia or Austria. But although Biggs was mayor, his speech was an expression of the thinking of neither the council as a whole nor all of the town's middle class, certainly in so far as it required public expenditure. In practice, the museum was virtually moribund until the 1870s for lack of financial support, and the urgency of Biggs's rhetoric made no impact as the threats of the 1840s receeded. Biggs sought to mobilise political support around the call for more positive government, but succeeded only in splitting the Leicester Liberals during the 1850s.[13] The effect on popular culture was negligible. By the 1870s, the rhetoric of rational recreation was no longer assured even of lip-service. The Rev. T.W. Owen, a Sabbatarian opposing proposals to open municipal buildings on Sunday evenings identified the flaw in all arguments based on the need to tame the dangerous classes when he asked 'Do those who frequent public houses avail themselves on the weekdays of the museum?'[14] Municipal reformers of the 1880s did not defend their efforts solely in moral terms, although temperance arguments still carried weight. It was now argued that there was a need 'to provide healthy recreations and enjoyment for

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12. LM 23.6.1849.
13. R.H. Evans, 'The Biggs Family of Leicester', TLAHS XLVIII 1972-3.
14. Rev. T.W. Owen Sermon (n.d.)

the toiling population of large industrial centres'. It was after all such people 'whose industry is the broad basis of our wealth'.[15] Municipal recreations, and even more so the policing which aimed to bring order to the streets, sought to enforce a social discipline parallel to, and reinforcing, that which was in dispute in the workplace, and which remained a major point of conflict in the shoe industry until 1895. This attitude is summed up in a resolution to abolish the Humberstone Gate Fair, put forward in 1889, on the grounds that

> the Town of Leicester is well provided with theatres of recreation and amusement of a respectable and high-class character and the Corporation have expended huge sums of money in providing public parks and recreation grounds for the health and enjoyment of the inhabitants with every attraction for both old and young, but without the objectionable concomitants which usually attend so-called pleasure fairs.[16]

Yet the resolution was not passed; the Fairs committee was as yet unable to convince the council, never mind the people of the town, of the need to cut through existing recreational patterns and customs, some of which involved the property rights of traders on the site of the fair. Moreover, the ordinary recreations of the town were by no means as free from 'objectionable concomitants' as the resolution made out.

Of course, the nature of popular recreations changed considerably during the last quarter of the 19th century; the history of sport and music hall alone are ample demonstration of that. But, as the study of municipal ventures shows, the council's part in that transformation was limited, and police measures were of greater impact than the provision of new facilities as far as most of the population were concerned. Where

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15. CM1/22:28.2.1888; 24.5.1887.

16. CM1/13:1.1.81.

the greatest success was achieved, as with the parks and the annual flower show, it was not wholly in terms envisaged by the proponents of rational recreation, and their popularity was to a great extent achieved through compromise with pre-existing cultural forms, such as the fair. The fundamental causes of the changing temper of popular culture are to be sought not in the arguments of rational recreationists or the civic gospel, but in the greater stability of working-class employment.

## A. Libraries and museums

### i. The Town Museum

The Leicester Museum was opened in June 1849, housing the collection donated by the Literary and Philosophical Society in the proprietory school building in the New Walk, bought for £3,390 the previous year. The ½d rate raised under the 1845 Museums Act was only sufficient to maintain the buildings, and the Literary and Philosophical Society continued to provide £52.10.0 a year for the curator's salary, and £50 for purchases. Otherwise the museum relied on gifts. Only in 1884 did a local act increase the rate to a maximum of 2d, although no more than a further ½d was called on.[1]

Despite these parsimonious origins, the Museum was launched with great enthusiasm on the part of its supporters on the council, notably William Biggs, during a day's festivities which also saw the opening of the new cemetery. The Leicester Mercury, echoing Biggs's enthusiasm, observed that the museum was 'devoted in perpetuity to the great and

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1. Library Handbook 1864. John Storey, Historical Sketch of some of the Principal Works and Undertakings of the Council of the Borough of Leicester (Leicester 1895), pp.32-33. Simmons (1974), vol. 2, p.28.

grand purpose of creating and fostering in the public a taste for the study of the countless wonders of Creation...'.[2] In keeping with the ecumenical spirit of the Literary and Philosophical Society, party differences, intense in the 1840s, were absent from the ceremony, though so too were ministers of religion. Lord John Manners headed a long list of gentlemen and businessmen, all of whom, no doubt, could agree with Biggs that the defence of property, public order and free institutions was a desirable end, to be furthered by the promotion of education.

The gap between the great purpose of the museum's promoters and its execution was soon apparent. Simmons's verdict that the museum was 'dingy and overcrowded with an incoherent display of exhibits' needs no revision .[3] When the joint management of the museum by the Literary and Philosophical Society and the Council was ended in 1873, the Museum Committee reported that the museum had 'fallen into that quiescent condition, which so easily creeps into the management of long established institutions...'[4] and that its popularity was in decline. Efforts to reverse the trend were attempted, but attendances continued to fall in the 1870s. The Curator was sent on a week's study leave to the museums of London,[5] but the immediate effect can only have been to increase his frustration as, until 1880, repairs diverted all available funds from providing new exhibits or extending the galleries to reduce overcrowding. Nevertheless, Saturday evening lectures on popular scientific subjects attracted capacity crowds,

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2. LM 23.6.49.
3. Simmons, loc.cit.
4. Museum Committee Report 1873.
5. ibid.

averaging 360 in 1880, and on occasion reaching 550. The Curator, Harrison (1872-80), further encouraged use of the museum by giving scientific lectures to youths, a practice his successor was not permitted to continue due to the time involved. The Cambridge University external lectures, however, were considered too dry to attract large audiences.[6]

In 1881, the Museum was closed for alterations and extension, and a new optimism pervaded subsequent reports of the committee. In 1882, it was hoped that the museum would eventually become the nucleus of a college of science, and crowds grew as loan exhibitions from South Kensington provided welcome variety.[7] The museum became increasingly a resort on Easter and Whit Bank Holidays, when up to 4,000 would visit in one day, but many of the visitors were excursionists.[8] In the last decades before 1914, the museum was increasingly used for educational purposes, and efforts were made to encourage school parties to visit.[9]

Whatever the importance of the Museum's role in promoting geological and archaeological studies, it is clear that it failed to become a popular institution. The taxonomical bias of the arrangement of nineteenth-century museum collections meant that it was unable - had it been willing - to cultivate popular enthusiasm for exhibitions of wonders so ably exploited by showmen at fairs. At best, the museum was able to provide serious-minded working men with lectures on popular science subjects, appealing to much the same group, one suspects, as Vaughan's adult school or the Free Library.

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6. Museum Committee Reports 1873, 1874, 1875, 1880.
7. Museum Committee Reports 1882, 1884.
8. LDP 7.8.88.
9. Museum Committee Reports, 1902, 1912.

ii. Libraries

Rate-supported free libraries became feasible under the Museums Act of 1846 and the Public Libraries Act of 1850, both of which were permissive. According to Thomas Kelly, the building of public libraries was dominated by the conditions of the latter, and especially its limited allowance of a penny rate, until 1919. Since local option was given such free play, the enthusiasm with which the act was implemented depended greatly on the climate of rate payers' opinion, and on the ability of local reformers to manipulate it. The sluggish response of municipal authorities to the Act - only 27 had established libraries by 1868 - detracts greatly from Kelly's assertion that it was 'a milestone along the road to a more humane and more democratic society'.[1] Rather, the slow progress of the movement raises questions as to how important libraries really were in the campaign for rational recreation, and how effective they were in changing patterns of popular leisure. For the mid-19th century Liberal middle class, the etatist implications of municipal control of reading matter made free libraries far from the unmixed blessings they represented for Ewart or for pioneer public librarians such as Edward Edwards or Thomas Greenwood. Behind the reforming rhetoric, there remained the largely untouched question of how far libraries won a place in the working-class communities they were intended to enlighten.

Leicester was not unusual in that the adoption of a resolution to open a free library and reading room, passed in 1862, resulted in no action whatsoever until 1869, when, under somewhat changed circumstances,

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1. Thomas Kelly, A History of the Public Libraries in Great Britain 1845-1975 (2nd edn. 1977).

measures were taken which led to the opening of the Central Library in Wellington Street in 1871.[2] Calls for the establishment of a free library were heard in the 1850s as it became increasingly clear that the Mechanics' Institute was failing in its Broughamite mission.[3] By that time, the town possessed a number of lending libraries and news rooms. The Leicester Permanent Library had been formed in 1791 by Richard (later Sir Richard) Phillips, the radical founder of the Adelphi Society.[4] Following Phillips's imprisonment and departure from Leicester, the library was revived by the bookseller Thomas Coombe in 1800, and in 1839 became part of the General News Room (f.1835). Its subscription was £1.5.0 per annum.[5] The Leicester Circulating Library, established by John Ireland in 1790, was later taken over by Coombe as well. Such wholly commercial enterprises continued to provide the middle class with books until the end of the century. Isabel Ellis remembered her father using J. and T. Spencer and Co.'s library in the Market Place in the 1860s and '70s, and the Permanent was still operating with over 500 subscribers and 16,000 books in 1891.[6] The Town Library, established in 1587, had long since become moribund, its collection of theological tomes poorly looked after and not added to after 1864.[7] In addition to these, two institutions aimed

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2. Storey, op.cit., p.38. Similar cases quoted by Kelly are Norwich, 1850-57, and Blackburn, 1855-62 op.cit. p.25.
3. e.g. LJ 18.4.56.
4. Frank S. Herne, History of the Town Library and of the Permanent Library Leicester (Leicester, 1891), p.70. Rev. Thomas Lomas, A Memoir of the Late Richard Harris (Leicester 1855).
5. Herne, op.cit., p.20.
6. I.C. Ellis, op.cit., p.113, Herne, op.cit., p.22.
7. ibid., p.3.

at a wider public. The Mechanics' Institute Library and reading room (f.1835) were open to all members, and were inexpensive, as was the Temperance Hall Reading Room, an important element of the original project, launched in 1853. Wholly philanthropic bodies also sponsored reading rooms. Joseph Dare noted of the Leicester Domestic Mission Reading Room that 'the order and quiet of the evening spent here contrasts favourably with the confusion and dissipation of the low taverns'. But the reading room had only a small regular attendance, 10 - 12 on average in 1846, perhaps not surprisingly in view of the temperance material pushed by Dare at the time.[8]

It is thus clear that the initiative of 1862 did not take place in the absence of alternative reading facilities, and opposition to its was partly expressed in terms of the threat it posed to existing arrangements. Moreover, its proponents were not bringing literacy to a hitherto illiterate public, but seeking to guide its choice of reading matter.[9] The most persistent voice behind the scheme was that of Councillor, later Alderman, George Stevenson, who was to be chairman of the Library Committee from its inception in 1872 until 1891. Stevenson outlined his reasons for favouring a free library in an address to the Literary and Philosophical Society in March, 1862. Wider availability of good literature, Stevenson thought, would lead to the 'occupation of the popular mind with the thoughts of others'. This in turn would make for stability in society as a whole and in the domestic life of readers. Free libraries would reach out

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8. LDM 1846, 1847.

9. On popular literacy, see T. Barclay, op.cit., Thomas Cooper, The Life of Thomas Cooper (1872). David Vincent, Bread, Knowledge and Freedom (1981).

to more people because they were not tainted by paternalism, and they were not to be 'People's Libraries', which implied that they were for one class only. As in Liverpool, Manchester and Salford, Stevenson held, a rate-supported library would make for class-harmony, and further the natural tendency of good literature to chase out bad.[10]

Much of this was unthinkingly accepted by reform-minded bourgeois in the 1860s - as long as it didn't threaten to increase the rates. Stevenson's resolution passed in a council which contained even the arch-retrencher Whetstone.[11] At once, a strong body of opinion formed against the proposal to adopt the 1850 Act, effectively delaying it for seven years, based on Liberal opinion in the wards and the objections of the press. The latter disliked the inclusion of a newsroom in the proposal, threatening, so it was feared, its potential readership.[12] More complex doubts were expressed at ward meetings. Some were against the danger of an extension of municipal power into the realm of ideas and information, while others considered the venture superfluous since literature was now so cheap to buy. Others argued that a subscription to one of the existing newsrooms was only 2d a week; those who couldn't afford that were hardly likely to be reached by a free library, and the under use of the reading rooms suggested anyway a lack of popular interest in serious reading. The Free Library would be bound to put out of business laudable philanthropic and self-help ventures at the Mechanics' Institute and the Temperance Hall. Some of these were undoubtedly rationalisations

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10. George Stevenson, Book Friends and Tastes; and Free Libraries (Leicester 1862), pp. 14, 17-18, 21.

11. LC 25.10.62.

12. LC 18.10.62.

of ratepayers' self-interest, but they were sufficiently strong for the resolution to be virtually ignored by the time of the November 1862 local elections, when the Liberal vote held up, as ever. The 1850 Act, though approved in principle, remained unadopted.[13]

By 1869, the context had changed significantly. Quite apart from the triumph of a more positive Liberalism nationally in 1868, with an interest in national education, both the Temperance Hall and Mechanics' Institute reading rooms were in trouble. The latter, after a long decline, finally collapsed in 1870, its demise precipitated but not initiated by the inception of the Free Library. The New Hall Co. had also run into difficulties, and in 1869 the Council was able to acquire nine-tenths of the shares for £3,160 from the estate of Thomas Sutherland.[14]

While this is evidence that the Council was willing to embark on a new phase of municipal enterprise, its members had less confidence in the support of the ratepayers who, until 1893, were to be consulted by referendum before the 1850 Act could be adopted. In over 40 cases between 1850 and 1892, voters rejected councils' proposals, and on other occasions, the library rate was reduced by popular demand.[15] To avoid such an outcome, the Leicester Town Council raised money under the Museums Act to pay for the library, with the result that both institutions were underfunded throughout the century.

Once established, the Leicester Free Library was neither large nor well-housed, and fits well with Kelly's description of libraries

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13. LC 1.11.62.

14. Storey, op.cit., p.38. Craig E. Grewcock, 'The Leicester Mechanics' Institute' in D. Williams (ed.), The Adaptation of Change (Leicester 1980).

15. After 1866, a simple majority was sufficient. T. Kelly, op.cit., p.23.

before the 1880s as underfinanced and too small.[16] The ½d rate raised only £450 per annum in 1870, rising to £868.9.2 in 1885 as population and property values grew.[17] The money went largely on salaries, and, in common with similar libraries elsewhere, donations and bequests were relied upon to extend the collection beyond that taken over from the Mechanics' Institute. There are several indications that, after an initial burst of interest, the Library was not very successful in its first decade. Thomas Greenwood wrote of Leicester in 1890 that 'After a trying experience extending over some years, the Public Library here seems to be again in the full enjoyment of renewed public popularity'.[18] The statistics, such as they are,[19] point to a slump in the number of borrowers between the late 1870s and 1890. (Table 2.1). Several explanations are plausible. The difficulty of getting books under the closed access system generally used before the First World War was no incentive to readers interested in popular works. The committee's wish to 'select such works as are calculated to instruct or amuse, at the same time guarding against the admission of such as are of an immoral or doubtful tendency ...'[20] may have meant that it was inflexible in meeting popular demand. In 1883, the librarian of the newly-formed Garendon Street branch wrote to ask the committee's opinion about the desirability of putting on loan Miss Bradden's novels, which had been included in Sir Israel Hart's inaugural

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16. ibid., p.32.

17. ibid., p.28.

18. Thomas Greenwood, Public Libraries (3rd edn. 1890), p.171.

19. In 1881, a discrepancy was discovered between the librarian's returns and a check made by the town clerk on use of the library. Not only was more efficient record-keeping recommended, but the dismissal of the librarian, Lings, became a subject for discussion by the library committee. (CM17/3:3.5.81). The issue calls into question the reliability of all library statistics prior to the enquiry.

20. Library committee annual report 1872.

gift, which, although very popular at Garendon Street, were not held by the Central Library.[21] The Library Committee attributed the lack of interest to factors outside their own control, pointing out that

> the success of the Evening Concerts in drawing vast numbers of young people to a new and attractive source of recreation, has no doubt tended to pre-occupy, to some extent, the reading time of the working classes; and the multiplication of Institutes and Clubs and Board Schools, forming libraries of their own, can scarcely have failed to affect the circulation of the central library.[22]

It seems to have been the case that use of the libraries, offering free but unexciting recreation, increased as local trade declined. Thus apart from short-term fluctuations, the prosperous 1870s and early 1880s provided less promising ground for the library than the period of high unemployment and underemployment in the shoe trade from c.1886. It is difficult to distinguish this factor from the inadequate accommodation offered by the old central library, which was cramped and, at times, stiflingly hot. From the 1880s, new branches were opened, at Garendon Street (1882) and Westcotes (1888), and, with borough extension, in Aylestone and Knighton in 1895. Further branches were built in Woodgate and Belgrave Road in 1897, by which time earlier efforts to open temporary branches in board schools and coffee houses were no longer necessary. The branches did much to revive interest, but it was not until 1905 that Carnegie's intervention solved the difficulty of the inadequate central library, where

> for 34 years the Wellington St. barn - ex-eating house, ex-music hall, ex-mechanics' institute - has served the purpose ... With lending library, reading room, ladies' room all in one department; with a reference library ... the memory of which is best buried in silence and secrecy; with an arrangement of volumes which made one tremble ...[23]

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21. CM17/3:13.11.1883.

22. Library Committee annual report 1887, p.4.

23. LDP 9.5.1905.

Table 2.1

| No. of Library Tickets in Force | | % of nearest census population |
|---|---|---|
| 1871 | 5,222 | 5.5% |
| 1880 | 4,157 | 3.4% |
| 1885 | 4,731 | |
| 1890 | 8,757 | 5.0% |
| 1895 | 13,403 | |
| 1900 | 15,071 | 7.1% |
| 1905 | 15,523 | |
| 1910 | 19,799 | 7.3% |
| 1914 | 22,044 | |

Sources: CM17. Library Committee Annual Reports

Yet even the opening of the new building in Bishop Street didn't ensure the continuing satisfaction of the Committee. In 1900, the Committee had for the first time made a generally pessimistic assessment of the role of the library. Only one-fifth at the most of the town's population had any involvement with it.[24] In 1914, the tone of their report was the same as borrowing declined. The committee considered that

> It is difficult to assign any particular reason for decline in this report. It may be due to the cheapness of books, and the consequent purchase instead of borrowing, or to the attraction of Picture Houses.[25]

To some extent, the sanguine hopes of Stevenson and the first committee made it inevitable that performance could never match expectations. As in all schemes of rational recreationists, there was a limit to the extent to which reading could capture a popular audience, and while some were happy to avail themselves of the facility, others were not interested. Estimates of the proportion of the population with tickets do indeed suggest that the libraries reached only a small number (Table 2.2).

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24. Library committee annual report 1899-1900.

25. Library committee annual report 1913-14.

Table 2.2

Occupations of New Library Ticket Holders at the Central Library

| | 1871 | | 1880 | | 1889 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Framework knitters | 143 | 4.8 | 165 | 7.4 | 284 | 6.4 |
| Elastic web weavers | 102 | 3.4 | 25 | 1.1 | 31 | 0.8 |
| Shoe hands | 217 | 7.2 | 349 | 15.6 | 531 | 12.2 |
| Building workers | 255 | 8.5 | 86 | 3.8 | 111 | 2.5 |
| Apprentices | 138 | 4.6 | 24 | 1.1 | 39 | 0.9 |
| Scholars | 412 | 13.7 | 258 | 11.5 | 790 | 18.1 |
| Errand boys | 118 | 3.9 | - | - | 174 | 4.0 |
| Domestic servants | | | 102 | 4.6 | 38 | 0.9 |
| Teachers | 102 | 3.4 | 69 | 3.1 | 176 | 4.0 |
| Shopworkers | 72 | 2.4 | 124 | 5.5 | 125 | 2.9 |
| Clerks | 294 | 9.8 | 163 | 7.3 | 294 | 6.7 |
| Warehousemen | 34 | 1.1 | 28 | 1.3 | 136 | 3.1 |
| No occupation | 144 | 4.9 | 17 | 0.8 | 529 | 12.1 |
| Subtotal | | 67.7 | | 63.1 | | 74.7 |
| OTHER OCCUPATIONS | | 32.3 | | 36.9 | | 25.3 |
| TOTAL | 3,000 | 100 | 2,240 | 100 | 4,356 | 100 |

Source: Library Committee Annual Reports

Presumably more used the reading rooms and it was reckoned that books reached other members of borrowers' families.[26] All classes were to be found amongst readers, and although the 531 shoehands among new borrowers in 1889 was only a minute fraction of the number of such workers in the town, they made up the biggest adult occupational group to use the library.

26. Library Committee annual report 1899-1900.

It is apparent, though, that during the 1880s, the library was increasingly the resort of those under 20, mostly, one assumes, as an aspect of the development of board school education. (Table 2.3).

Although few in absolute numbers, it is likely that adult readers included a core of dedicated working men and women. Tom Barclay describes his passion for reading as an adolescent in the 1870s, the basis, along with Vaughan's adult classes of his autodidacticism. The shoemakers' leader, William Inskip, addressing the council in 1892, recalled that

> When he worked at the bench, which he did for years, he lived in Wellington St., and his only opportunity of getting news - for instance parliamentary debates - was at dinner-time, when he used to have a quarter of an hour in the Free Library.[27]

But such cases, though not unique, must have been rare. Report after report regretted the fondness of borrowers for fiction, a common complaint of 19th century librarians.[28] The attitude of the library authorities to their working-class target audience remained cautious. For a long time, policemen were expected to stand guard over the reading room on Monday, Tuesday and Saturday evenings at the most popular times, 6-9pm, and to look in on other days.[29] The fear of disorder was never justified at the central reading room, although the Woodgate branch experienced harrassment from 'rude unmannerly boys' in its first two months in 1898, requiring the deployment of a policeman.[30]

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27. T. Barclay, op.cit., p.35. LDP 2.4.92.

28. Library Committee annual reports 1890, 1891, 1898-99.

29. CM17/1:2.1.1872.

30. Library Committee Annual Report 1898-99.

**Table 2.3**

Age of New Borrowers, Central Library

| | 1871 | | 1880 | | 1886 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| -15 | 569 | 19.0 | 632 | 31.2 | 899 | 45.7 |
| 15-20 | 1288 | 42.9 | 563 | 27.8 | 405 | 20.6 |
| 20-40 | 971 | 32.4 | 723 | 35.7 | 568 | 28.8 |
| 40- | 172 | 5.7 | 106 | 5.2 | 99 | 5.0 |
| Total | 3000 | | 2028 | | 1969 | |

Source: Library Committee Minutes

The reading room was seen by the library authorities as a haven for working men, 'where the worthy and intelligent masses of our fellow townsmen may spend their evenings freed from the demoralising allurements to which they are so greatly exposed',[31] and the desire for such places may have motivated those 6-8000 working men said to have petitioned the council for a free library in 1862 as did the small but constant group of readers who were disappointed by the discontinuation of an experimental temporary branch at the Syston Street board school in 1876.[32] But the library committee was hesitant to harness such manifestations of popular enthusiasm lest the civilising mission of the libraries be lost sight of. Control over the purchase of books remained a central issue for the Committee although extreme caution did not survive Stevenson's period of office. Efforts to exclude books on political and religious grounds were not frequent, but from time to time provided discussion on the Committee. Darwin's works, Bradlaugh's Life, Whittaker's Life's Battles and Temperance Armour, the Co-operative Newspaper, Clarion and Labour Co-partnership were all eventually accepted. The Alliance News, Kay Prentice's Spiritual

31. Library Committee Annual Report 1876.

32. Library Committee Annual Report 1876.

Philosophy, The Commonwealth, Christian Socialist and Freedom were not.[33] There was particular reluctance to accept gifts from radical political groups, whether the UK Alliance or the Socialist League. Socialists could have been more severely treated, although they could point out that orthodox works, such as the Economist were not subject to similar scrutiny. If anything, Stevenson's greatest fear was of sensationalism, leading to immorality. In 1888, the committee decided to ban certain Sheffield newspapers on these grounds, as well as the sensational portion of the Leicester Chronicle and Mercury.[34]

The issue which brought most starkly into opposition the improving mentality of the Library Committee and the culture of a section of the Leicester working class was that of the blotting-out of betting news in the daily press. The proposal was first made by the Committee to the Council in April 1892, in order to exclude from the reading room a crowd of about twenty men who crowded around the daily papers for racing news at 9 o'clock each morning. The chairman of the committee was offended by 'their persistent selfishness and very often the unpleasant odours which surround them ...', a remark which Inskip thought had better not have been made. The public reading room, it was later argued, was becoming 'a recognised school for teaching boys to bet ...',[35] and the racing enthusiasts were denying access to the newspapers to other readers.

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33. CM17/1:7.1.73; CM17/3:16.10.83; 14.4.85; CM17/5:12.9.93; 9.10.93; 13.11.94; CM17/1:28.2.71; CM17/3:12.5.85; CM17/4:9.12.90.

34. CM17/3:10.7.1888.

35. LDP 2.4.92. Kelly claims that the first instance took place at a library in Aston in 1893, but is clearly mistaken. The Leicester library committee knew of at least 6 previous experiments.

Whether they were corrupting youth or merely following a legitimate sporting interest, as opponents of blotting out such as Inskip maintained, blotting out was left to the discretion of the committee, and continued until 1912-13, when its demise led to no recurrence of the initial difficulty.[36]

The other major controversy which affected the Library was that over Sunday opening, in which arguments followed predictable lines.[37] Attempts to get the Reading Room to open on Sundays were defeated in 1877 and 1879, after petitioning by religious groups. By 1890, council opinion had changed sufficiently to vote for an experimental period of Sunday opening the following year, precipitating Stevenson's resignation from the Library committee. The experiment proved a success, and the average attendance of 230 on Sunday evenings was comparable to that of weekdays. Behaviour was sufficiently good for a police guard to be dispensed with on Sundays in 1895, and the committee was satisfied that attendance at the library was a beneficial alternative to other Sunday recreations.[38]

Ultimately, one is led to the conclusion that the library's history reveals more about changing middle-class aspirations for and orientation towards popular culture than about popular recreation itself. The relatively small proportion of the population who used the facilities and the absence of any real working class initiative meant that it was never a central institution in working-class life. Even so, it facilitated the autodidacticism of men such as Barclay and Inskip, although working-men's clubs,the Labour Club and the Secular Society meant that there were always alternatives.

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36. Library Committee Annual Reports 1892, 1912-13.

37. See below pp. 195-203

38. CM1/24:23.11.1890; CM17/4:21.1.91; CM17/5:10.11.95; CM17/5:12.1.92. Storey, op.cit., p.39. Library Committee Annual Report 1892.

The free library brought about the demise of the Temperance Hall Library, and replaced the Mechanics' Institute library, but didn't replace the middle-class circulating libraries. In that respect, it failed to become the all-class institution envisaged by Stevenson in 1862. In the long run, municipal libraries may have come to replace many of the educational functions of working-class clubs and societies, but that stage was not reached before 1914.

## B. PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

### i. Introduction

The first generation of rational recreationists in the 1830s showed great concern for the preservation of public open space. Agricultural enclosure and urban growth alike threatened the commons which had been used for leisure as well as production. The report of the Select Committee on Public Walks and Places of Exercise warned of the danger to working-class morals implicit in this loss, since if working men were deprived of space 'it is probable that their only escape will be drinking shops, where, in short-lived excitement, they may forget their toil, but where they waste the means of their families, and too often destroy their health'.[1] The Select Committee on Drink of the following year made the same association, but in each case the solution was sought in an appeal to philanthropy rather than government or local authority action. Nevertheless in 1838, Hume's resolution to include provision for public space in all future enclosure bills was accepted, although the working of the General Enclosure Act of 1836, by making enclosure easier, still served to reduce public

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1. PP 1833 xv Report.

access to the land.[2] During the remainder of the 19th century, legislative efforts were made to facilitate the opening of parks and recreation grounds, both in general measures such as the 1859 Recreation Grounds Act, and in local improvement acts.

Initiative at first lay with private philanthropy. Jedidiah Strutt gave land for the Derby Arboretum in 1839, and similar works were carried out in Manchester and Bradford in the 1840s. Elsewhere, popular demand could bring about state intervention, as in the construction of Victoria Park in London in 1844-7, and municipal authorities became involved, as when the Leeds Corporation bought the town moors in 1854.[3]

The historiography of public open spaces has been dominated by the utilitarian views of the proponents of parks. The legitimation of public expenditure was largely expressed in terms of sanitary requirements and, when a wider perspective was in order, of the moral development of the working classes. The ensuing controversies between improvers and economists in local authorities has led historians to portray the park movement as an aspect of the march of the improving spirit by which far-sighted and humanitarian reformers dispelled ancient prejudice and parsimony and saved the city from choking on its own waste. Once the principle of park building was established as a legitimate sphere of local government involvement, parks were provided in a strictly functional manner, according to perceived or anticipated needs generated by urban

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2. Cunningham, op.cit., p.82.

3. Charles Poulsen, Victoria Park (1976).

expansion. From there, it is claimed, it was a short step to modern town planning with its calculated ratios of open space to built-up areas.[4]

This view, like any teleological interpretation of events, deflects attention from the cultural conflict inherent in the 'creation' of open spaces, and, by accepting reformers' own definitions of the process which they initiated, tends to ignore the place which parks came to occupy in working-class communities. While it is difficult to deny that reservation of open spaces was in some sense desirable, the historian needs to reserve judgement about the form which provision took. This is especially the case given that parks were not newly-created open spaces - there are no cases of wholesale demolition of built-up areas in the 19th century for this purpose - but represented conversion of previously existing space to a new use, under new patterns of control. In many cases, agricultural land was bought up - though often previously unenclosed - but on other occasions, the land was already recreational land under customary regulation. It is from the perspective of cultural conflict, rather than unproblematic philanthropy, that the development of such facilities is to be interpreted.

ii. Recreation grounds in Leicester before 1877

Leicester's open fields began to be used for building in 1803 when the old corporation began to develop the Southfields. Generous provision was made by the Corporation for open space. The Racecourse was free from building plans, and a considerable portion was left for the Freemen's

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4. e.g. A. Stracher and I.R. Bowler, 'The Development of Public Parks and Gardens in the City of Leicester', East Midlands Geographer (1976) p.282:- 'The locational pattern of parks clearly matches that of the population and reflects both the public and private response to expressed need'.

Common, used for pasture and allotments. In 1839, 40 acres beside the Welford Road were set aside as a recreation ground, marking the limit of the middle-class Newtown development.[5] To the north of the town, the low land along the Soar was too marshy to be suitable for extensive building development, and it remained unenclosed common land, divided between the Abbey Meadow and St. Margaret's Pasture. In 1804, Susannah Watts described the area as '140 acres of perhaps the richest soil in the kingdom'.[6] It was variously used for volunteer drill during the Napoleonic Wars and as a practice ground for the Gentlemen Cricket Players of Leicester. As the town grew north-eastwards, the Abbey Meadows and Pasture became 'the usual playground and breathing space for the lower side of the town'.[7]

The pasture became the site of all that was abhorrent to middle-class reformers. Its sanitary state was certainly undesirable, and the polluted river inundated it with effluvia.[8] It was used for dog races, courting and for assemblies of youths.[9] In the early 1850s, meetings of hosiery hands were addressed there by trade union leaders,[10] although this was not subsequently an issue. By the 1860s, there were complaints in the press about naked youths swimming in the river by the Pasture.[11]

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5. Temple Patterson, op.cit., p.56.
6. Susannah Watts, A Walk Through Leicester (1804) p.53.
7. LDM 1852.
8. Elliott, op.cit., p.56.
9. I.C. Ellis, op.cit., p.249. LDM 1861.
10. PP 1854-55 xiv, q.3189.
11. e.g. LC 29.7.71.

Joseph Dare deplored the behaviour of 'a set of naked ruffians' who corrupted children and spent their time 'thrusting themselves into boats where there are females'. He recalled how he had seen 'fellows splashing about up to the North Bridge in full view of the public road and contiguous factories'. All these offences were the worse for taking place on Sundays.[12]

The deplorable moral condition of the Pasture, as respectable opinion perceived it, led to the demand for control. Dare linked improvement and control as joint aims in his report in 1861,[13] but nothing had been done by 1876 when the Sanitary Committee reported to the Council that 'the desirability of obtaining some better control over the St. Margaret(s Pasture for the purpose of a public recreation ground has been frequently discussed in your committee ...'. Councillor Windley took the initiative of renting the pasture himself at a cost of £60.10.0 per annum, which he recovered from the grazing rents, and the Corporation improved the cricket facilities and provided a bandstand and seats.[14] The same year, the Leicester Improvement Act empowered the Council to purchase the Meadows as part of the floodworks scheme, and the problem of controlling the Pasture was solved by the wholesale redevelopment of the area as the Abbey Park, Leicester's first purpose-built ornamental park, opened in 1882.[15]

Meanwhile, there had been comparable efforts to provide and control amenities in other parts of the town. Promenading along London Road

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12. LDM 1860, 1861, 1874.
13. LDM 1861.
14. CM1/15:25.4.1876.
15. William Kelly, op.cit.

had long been a popular pastime, especially for courting couples.[16] This was made all the more attractive by the opening of the Racecourse all year round in 1866. The Welford Road Recreation Ground seems to have had none of the evil associations of the Pasture, and in 1864, the Chronicle observed that

> it is pleasing to witness, during the summer evenings, the great numbers of young men and boys indulging in the healthy game of cricket ... It is no uncommon sight to see between one and two hundred youths and boys vigorously cricketing at the same time.[17]

In the eastern part of the town, though, Dare observed that the Spinney Hills and Willow Bridge Fields were both 'pestiferous' with 'the depravity of shoemakers'.[18] The cricket ground in Wharf Street had been sold for housing development in 1866, although as a commercial venture it had given access only to those who could afford its subscriptions for sports, or the entrance charged for its popular Monday evening dances.[19] The Council could point to both moral and sanitary arguments to support its designation of the Willow Bridge Close as a public recreation ground in 1870.[20] The close itself had been used for recreation 20 years before, but had since fallen out of use. Dare's comments must apply to adjacent land which was presumably built on soon afterwards. The new recreation ground was to be open to 9pm each day, except Sundays when it was to remain closed. The opening ceremony retained a curiously archaic character, shared by the sports which William Biggs had sponsored on the Welford

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16. The popularity of this is shown in T. Condon, Sunday Journal (1861), LRO DE 2337/4 e.g. entry for 25.7.68.

17. LC 25.6.64.

18. LDM 1865, p.12.

19. LC 22.5.1880. Temple Patterson, op.cit., p.173. Melville's Directory of Leicester 1854, p.15.

20. LC 23.4.79.

Road Recreation Ground in 1849, and in contrast to the respectability and municipal pageantry of that at Abbey Park in 1882. The Rifle Volunteers' band and fireworks were respectable enough, but the programme of sports included not only foot and velocipede races, but ducking for 6d.s and racing up greasy poles for mutton joints and a new hat. The swingboats, stalls and rifle galleries gave the event the commercial character of the Races or Humberstone Gate Fair, and cannot have pleased the more improvement-minded councillors who processed from the Vestry Hall to the field.[21]

To the west of the river, new housing and factory development was followed in 1868 by the provision of a similar small recreation ground beside King Richard's Road.[22] The higher ground at the other end of the road, formerly Watts Causeway, had been a traditional site for sport on Easter Monday until damage to neighbouring property, presumably that of Danett's Hall, led to its suppression in the 1820s.[23] The new initiative was stimulated by a petition of several hundred signatures to the Council in 1867 asking for a recreation ground, resulting in the formation of a committee of interested gentlemen, including the members for West St. Mary's ward, Barwood and Harding.[24] Given the council's financial caution, and especially the difficulty of getting municipal funds for a ward project, the committee came to rely heavily on the philanthropy of Archibald Turner, whose elastic web factory was next to the ground, and whose workers were to benefit most directly, and T.T. Paget who owned half the plot. Each sold his share for half its market value. The opening ceremony on Easter

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21. LC 23.4.1870.
22. LC 21.3.1868.
23. Temple Patterson, op.cit., p.107.
24. LC 18.4.1868.

Monday celebrated their generosity. Members of the committee spoke at length to the assembled crowd before retiring to the Blue Boar in Southgate Street for a gala dinner. The speeches suggest that it was very much intended as a children's playground, and Harding observed that

> it would tend to improve the morals of the youthful population, and would clear their streets of young children who were compelled to play there, to the annoyance of many of the inhabitants.

But the 'elevation of the tastes of the people' as a whole was also contemplated. J.J. Preston, who thought his presence to be proof of the concern shown by the inhabitants of the London Road for the welfare of 'less favoured parts of the town', hoped that adults would use it too, especially now they had the Saturday half-holiday. Lest there be any doubt as to the standard of behaviour on the ground, Preston added, the regulations 'would prevent anything viscious or immoral being practised there'.

During the following year, a correspondent of the Leicester Chronicle reported that

> Several thousands of persons, of different ages, have assembled on Monday evenings, and enjoyed themselves listening to music or taking part in some amusements without finding the stimulus of drink necessary.

Far from threatening the home, the ground furthered the domestic comforts of working men and their families, it was claimed.[25] At Easter 1870, the annual opening of the ground, presumably a formality to justify a festivity, showed that the connection with Turner's factory had been maintained as the works band performed for the dancing. Unlike the inauguration in 1868, there were no speeches, 'the committee entertaining a shrewd

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25. LC 26.6.1869.

notion that hard workers would prefer enjoying themselves to listening to speech makers'.[26] Despite this hint of previous resistance at least to the superficial manifestations of mid-Victorian philanthropy, there was a marked difference in the temper of the crowds in the West End and those in the north and east of the town. This may be attributable to the contrast between the relatively well-paid, regularly-employed factory hands who lived in the new housing around Turner's mill and the domestic and workshop-based hosiery and shoe workers of Wharf Street, Humberstone Gate and Belgrave Gate and their densely-populated side-streets.

These small recreation grounds, and the development of the Racecourse as a park, for the most part originating in the 1860s, have been overlooked in accounts of Leicester's parks, overshadowed as they were by the development of the Abbey Park. They took up little of the Council's time or money, and did not last long (the Racecourse excepted). The West End site was redeveloped for a board school in the early 1870s, while the East End Recreation Ground was built on by the Great Northern Railway in 1875.[27] Contemporaries who sought to stimulate park building comparable to Derby's Arboretum also had no interest in marking such small-scale ventures, yet these recreation grounds were the site in the 1860s and early 1870s of localised festivities, such as Easter in the West End, similar to earlier entertainments on the Cricket Ground, and to local flower shows of the same period. The rapid growth of population in areas adjacent to the grounds quickly made them inadequate for the demand for space, but it was not until the 1890s that the council was to develop a comparable series of local parks.

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26. LC 23.4.1870.

27. CM1/14:30.3.1875.

iii. Abbey Park

Leicester's lack of a major park was already identified as a deficiency in the 1850s. Dare had drawn attention to the need for parks and an arboretum in his very first report in 1846, as counterattractions to drink.[28] The Chronicle ten years later lamented that it was in this respect alone that the town lagged behind others of comparable size, especially neighbouring Derby and Nottingham. Civic pride was affronted, and while the Council had, as a sanitary improvement, laid out a cemetery overlooking the town with attractive walks, it was

> not precisely the place where people can resort for enjoyment or merry-making ... ginger-bread and ginger-beer, with military music, it must be allowed, would be quite out of place in an enclosure set apart for the interment of the dead.[29]

The Chronicle hoped that a botanic garden or arboretum would be established as a private venture, with free admission for invalids and the young. The sale of Danett's Hall and its grounds in 1861 was seen as a lost opportunity to carry out the project.[30] Yet, despite the interest of medical men such as Dr. John Barclay, there was little effort by the Medical Officer of Health to convince the Council of the need for parks until after 1880; the problem of bad air was initially to be solved by improved drainage.[31]

The Abbey Park was built as part of a major flood prevention scheme, the latter a response to the high mortality rates in the parts of the town which were subject to flooding. The land for the improvement was

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28. LDM 1846, p.10.
29. LC 27.9.1856.
30. LC 28.12.1861. Dr. John Barclay, Modern Leicester (Leicester 1864).
31. Medical Officer of Health Reports 1885, 1887.

bought from a group of owners,[32] principally the estate of the Earl of Dysart, whose acres were sold for £190 each. This money, as well as that needed to buy out the common rights of the parishioners of St. Margaret's was raised under a further Act of 1878, and amounted in all to over £50,000.[33] This project, like the Town Hall, marks a departure from the Corporation's earlier parsimony, and reflects the confidence of the Liberal improvers on the council to carry with them their ratepaying supporters.[34] There was criticism of the scheme however; Robert Read called it 'our corporation's folly' and saw it as 'a proper climax to the policy which lost the town the Wharf St Cricket Ground, Dannett Hall Park, and Birstall Hall Park ...'. He stood unsuccessfully as the Tory candidate in the West St. Mary's election of 1879 in opposition to the Abbey Park scheme, favouring instead more local parks.[35]

The design of the park was the subject of a competition, the winner of which was the firm of Barron and Sons of Derby. The opening ceremony was marked by the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales on Whit Monday, May 29th, 1882. A decorations committee was set up by the council and collected £3,195.16.0 in subscriptions from the public for triumphal arches along the route between the Midland Railway station and the Park.

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32. Owners of land on the site of the Abbey Park scheme were
Maw (a London Barrister) 1 acre
Ecclesiastical Commissioners, 4 acres
Glover
Select Vestry of St. margaret's
Parishioners of Stoney Stanton, 3 acres
Sir Cornwallis Ricketts, Bart., 5 acres
Miss Nedham, 4 acres
Trustees of Trinity Hospital, Leicester
Sources: W. Kelly, op.cit., p.603. CM1/16:25.9.1877.

33. W. Kelly, op.cit.; Storey, op.cit.

34. Elliott, op.cit., p.157.

35. Robert Read, Modern Leicester (Leicester 1882) p.24.

Factories, pubs, shops and houses were also decorated by their inhabitants, and thousands lined the route from an early hour, dressed in Sunday best. The council overreached itself in providing 25,000 seats in stands along Belgrave Gate since the price asked was considered too high. Nevertheless, the windows of the houses along the street showed that the inhabitants were enthusiastic about the event. The speechmaking at the park included addresses by the Bishop of Peterborough and the Reverend J. Williams on behalf of the nonconformists of the town, and the event as a whole was intended to symbolise municipal unity and civic pride, linked to royal splendour and imperial might. The controversy over municipal expenditure was effectively buried, and was no more in evidence than the ideological rejection of ceremonial which characterised an earlier encounter of the reformed corporation with royalty in 1843, when the mayor had no regalia to wear for an audience with the Queen at Belvoir Castle.[36]

The rhetoric of the opening held that this was to be a People's Park, although in effect the ceremonial was an exorcism of the popular recreations which had previously taken place on the site. The highly geometric layout of the park with its Gardenesque aesthetic was as far removed as possible from the lawlessness of the old Pasture. Chadwick's contention is appropriate; Victorian parks were

> representations of idealised landscapes at the edge of their fast-growing towns, securely locked and gated and standing aloof from the realities of life ... Such parks represented art and were mainly instructive ...[37]

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36. W. Kelly, op.cit., p.552.

37. G.F. Chadwick, The Park and the Town (1966).

The bye-laws drawn up for Abbey Park, and extended to Leicester's other parks sought to channel popular culture within acceptable boundaries. They excluded unauthorised music, public meetings, horses, informal football and other sports, hawking of refreshments, dogs, fishing, skating, bonfires, bathing, except in designated areas, and carpet-cleaning. Sports were tolerated, within areas set aside for the purpose; refreshments could be bought, but only from the pavillion let out to a local caterer, and excluding alcohol. Boats were similarly controlled by a franchise holder.[38]

The new parks were characterised by regulation and licensing in the interest of 'rational recreation and healthy exercise'. The mayor hoped that 'Here the thoughtful may study some of Nature's choicest productions, and be charmed and instructed by her lovely forms and colours...'. The Park contained over 33,000 trees, floral borders and 18 acres of water as material for this instruction. The Tudor associations of the Abbey ruins were echoed in the design of the gatehouses and pavillion, since, as at Bradgate, contemplation of past times was considered uplifting. There was evidently some doubt among critics of the scheme as to the choice of the Pasture for improvement, given its proximity to the poorest area of the town. Kelly had to argue that while the character of the neighbourhood was 'not beyond improvement',

> we object entirely to the assertion that because the district is not a rich one that, therefore, it should not be made pleasing and healthful for those who reside there.[39]

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38. CM1/19:25.9.1883; CM1/20:25.3.1884; CM1/21:23.5.1886.

39. W. Kelly, op.cit., p.658.

There remains a problem in assessing how the townspeople used 'their' park - and how closely they abided by the regulations. In the early 1880s, the shoe hands still followed cultural patterns typical of hosiery workes 40 years earlier, and while the development of commercial sport at the Belgrave Road and Aylestone Road grounds may have satisfied some of their recreational needs, it seems unlikely that many could have been satisfied to promenade among the flower beds and sip tea in the Pavillion at the Abbey Park. There is no way of discovering what happened to the former habitues of the Pasture. In that many were youths, the creation of the Park meant that new generations had to find other places to congregate, or to pursue their activities at the cost of avoiding the supervision of park keepers.[40]

It would be incorrect to describe the Park as wholly unpopular. While the roughest elements of the working class were effectively suppressed, the Park became a place for family-centred leisure activities which were wholly respectable. In particular, the Park was a focus of interest in band music and horticulture, which were united at the annual flower shows from 1886 onwards.

iv. The Abbey Park Flower Show

The encouragement of interest in botany and horticulture was to the fore in the efforts of rational recreationists from the 1850s. It was prominent in the cultivation of Bradgate Park and other rural destinations for works' and temperance outings. Horticulture encouraged rejection of the indoor culture of the beerhouse and took gardeners away from the

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40. See Stephen Humphries, Hooligans and Rebels (1981).

morally and physically dangerous urban environment, if they could find an allotment, involving them in healthy, harmless exercise. Unlike many other popular recreations, especially sports, it does not seem to have been corrupted by betting. As Dare commented, 'The botanist has a harmless and useful hobby. I wish as much could be said for the bird fancier'.[41] Gardening had a keen potential following among the working class. John Buck, the first Medical Officer of Health, arguing aginst those who held that the poor were inherently dirty, drew attention in 1852 to 'the well-washed causeways and back-yards I often see, the vain attempts at the cultivation of plants and flowers'.[42]

The development of flower shows, which were to focus and popularise these interests was stimulated, however, not by the demands of working-class leisure, but by the competitive urges of the largest local landowners and of the growing nursery trade which existed to supply them and the lesser middle class. While the populated part of the town had always had a large amount of open space for gardens and orchards, by mid-century this was increasingly being used for building, and the movement of the bourgeoisie to the London Road and Stoneygate created a potential demand for nursery products, especially given the domestic focus of middle-class social life.[43]

It was against this background that the Leicester and Leicestershire Floral and Horticultural Society was formed in September 1856 at a meeting at the Town Clerk's Office. Lord Howe acted as president, while leading

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41. LDM 1857.

42. Medical Officer of Health Report 1852, p.12.

43. Details of competitive gardening by employees of landowners and others can be found in the periodical The Midland Florist and Suburban Horticulturist, published 1847-1863.

Liberal councillors, including the Mayor, J.D. Harris, John and William Biggs, Dr. Shaw, J. Brewin and R. Harris, as well as the Town Clerk, Samuel Stone, all offered support, although they were not committee members. The society aimed initially for three shows a year, the first indoors at the Corn Exchange, later the Temperance Hall, the others on the racecourse. By 1859, the show was firmly established, and there were 398 members of the society. Social acceptability was confirmed by the entry of the Duke of Rutland's gardener, Ingram, in the August show. As with the Abbey Park show later, the competition was divided into four categories, for Cottagers, Amateurs, Gentlemen's Gardeners and Nurserymen. The interest shown by the first group was disappointing at first; only 60 entered in 1859, a number which compared unfavourably with entries in the same category in shows in the county.[44]

There are indications that the event became increasingly popular in the following decade. The exclusive May show, for indoor fruits and hothouse plants, was considered to be of no interest to the working classes, and the August show was dropped by 1871, leaving the June event as a major spectacle.[45] The Midland Railway ran excursions to the show in June 1859, and, to encourage the supervised attendance of the lower orders, the committee offered 2d tickets in blocks of 150 to employers for their workpeople to attend between 5pm and 7pm. Attendance usually cost 6d. The popularity of the event was such that it was extended to two days the following year. During the 1860s, the formality of the event seems to have been relaxed somewhat. The Yeomanry and Militia bands played

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44. LJ 12.9.1856.

45. LC 21.6.1871. LJ 24.6.1859. LJ 2.12.1859.

in 1859, but in 1864 it was decided to stage a brass band contest, and bands from Chesterfield, Rothwell, Nottingham and Matlock (but no local bands) competed for a first prize of £12. In 1871, there was a caged bird show, including pigeons and canaries, as well as dancing to a band.[46]

Joseph Dare deplored this tendency of flower shows to turn into fair-like popular festivities. In 1868, he started a window plant show as part of the work of the Leicester Domestic Mission in All Saints Parish. Over 500 attended the first one, and there were 100 entries for prizes of kitchen utensils. Dare thought that by 1872, the result was to increase the number of window boxes in the neighbourhood.[47] But the first allotment holders' exhibition, held in 1875, was not to Dare's liking. He quoted a working man, presumably a member of his adult class, who regretted that there was no category for window boxes, and observed that

> the promoters seem to have had too many objects in view and to have considered rather the requirements of mere holiday-makers than cultivators of flowers and fruits ... it is difficult to see what "galvanic batteries" and shooting galleries, boat racing and dancing have to do with practicing winter gardening or the cultivation of allotments.[48]

The show referred to was that of the North Leicester Floral and Horticultural Society, held in W. Key's field in Woodgates, beside the Groby Road, on Bank Holiday Monday and Tuesday in August.[49] From a statement of Councillor Hanley at the Abbey Park Show in 1906 that, twenty years before, 'at the same period numerous flower shows were held in different parts of the town ...'[50] it is likely that the North End Show was the first

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46. LC 2.7.1864, 21.6.1871.
47. LDM 1868, 1872.
48. LDM 1875.
49. LDP, 5.8.1890; 4.8.1891.
50. LDP 9.8.1906.

of several such neighbourhood shows, although, since it was the only one to receive detailed press coverage, probably also the biggest. The rules of the society limited entries to gardeners from specified allotments, some municipal, others commercial, and was thus almost wholly for working men. In 1892, the best year for entries, there were 821 exhibits, probably the work of about 150 gardeners, but the show was not popular just for its horticultural attractions. The pleasure fair which had offended Dare's working man in 1875 could still be described as small in 1888 but two years later, the Leicester Daily Post's correspondent hoped that

> these amusements may not in time form the principal attractions of the event, to the detriment of the interest in the floral and horticultural exhibits, for of this there is a considerable danger.[51]

In that year there were aerial wire slides, acrobatic feats, comic sketches, juggling, Punch and Judy, a pony raffle, fireworks and dancing to the Highfields Brass Band, who played every year. The show had become something akin to an outdoor music hall, or seaside entertainment, while the flowers were still contained in only two marquees. In earlier years, there were also balloon ascents and swimming exhibitions.[52]

The local flavour of the show was enhanced by the offer of prizes for the best-decorated house on the streets leading to the show - a clever form of cheap publicity, and in 1887, many of the houses along Northgates were decorated with flowers. The withdrawal of prizes in 1892 at once led to the end of the practice, and no decoration was to be seen outside the showground.[54]

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51. LDP 2.8.1892; 7.8.1888. LDP 5.8.1890 reports 126 entries in the previous best year.
52. LDP 2.8.1887; 5.8.1890; 4.8.1891.
53. LDP 2.8.1887; 2.8.1892.
54. LDP 9.8.1906.

The show became for a time the main Bank Holiday attraction for the neighbourhood, surviving the rivalry of the Abbey Park Show until 1893, when entries and crowds fell and the promoters lost money. In common with other neighbourhood flower shows, the growth of the municipally-sponsored Abbey Park Show, and perhaps the ability of more people to afford excursions, county cricket matches or other counter-attractions, led to the demise of the North End Show, and it was not reported after 1893.

The growth of interest in horticulture and flower shows in the mid-1870s formed the basis for the most successful of all shows, that at Abbey Park from 1886 until the end of the period, engulfing all others, and attracting very large crowds to the new park. Indeed, the returns for attendance at the show is the best indication that the Park achieved a significant place in the popular culture of the town. The 42,500 who attended over two days in 1909, the best year, presumably included members of all classes and the character of the entertainments suggests a working-class component in the audience. (Table 2.4).

The initiative for the show came from the Abbey Park Committee who proposed a gala to raise money for more regular music in the parks during the summer, itself a means of increasing their attractiveness to the public.[55] At the time, it was felt that it was not politically feasible to raise the money from the rates, already burdened by the cost of the Park itself.[56] The plan, attributed to the Park Superintendent,

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55. CM1/21:25.5.1886.

56. LDP 7.8.1881.

**Table 2.4**

Abbey Park Flower Show; Takings,Profits and Attendance

| | Receipts Pounds | Profits Pounds | Attendance Tuesday | Wednesday | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1886 | 618 | 350 | | | |
| 1887 | 450 | 63 | | | |
| 1888 | | | | | |
| 1889 | 516 | 197 | | | |
| 1890 | 739 | 290 | | | |
| 1891 | 804 | 385 | | | |
| 1892 | 605 | 152 | | | |
| 1893 | 728 | 216 | | | |
| 1894 | 864 | 30 | | | |
| 1895 | 634 | 70 | | | |
| 1896 | 669 | 92 | | | |
| 1897 | 842 | -15 | | | |
| 1898 | 1662 | 419 | | | |
| 1899 | 1308 | 450 | 32958 | 7115 | 40073 |
| 1900 | 1039 | 117 | 24567 | 7062 | 32169 |
| 1901 | 1163 | 204 | 27804 | 6722 | 34526 |
| 1902 | 1025 | 188 | 28640 | 1181 | 29821 |
| 1903 | 1338 | 465 | 33566 | 6429 | 39995 |
| 1904 | 1274 | 478 | 32559 | 5563 | 38122 |
| 1905 | 1353 | 472 | 33780 | 4412 | 38192 |
| 1906 | 1321 | 383 | 30224 | 5125 | 35379 |
| 1907 | 1256 | 265 | 25794 | 8255 | 34094 |
| 1908 | 1375 | 318 | 30324 | 5380 | 35704 |
| 1909 | 1542 | 447 | 32835 | 9792 | 42627 |
| 1910 | 1245 | 162 | 25081 | 7282 | 32363 |
| 1911 | 1132 | 63 | 23955 | 5492 | 29447 |
| 1912 | 928 | -168 | 14996 | 7218 | 22214 |
| 1913 | 1337 | 366 | 28053 | 8475 | 36528 |
| 1914 | 1015 | 82 | 22848 | 4225 | 27073 |

Source; Council Minutes, CM1

Mr. Burn, was to hold the show on the Tuesday following Bank Holiday Monday, to minimise counter-attractions, and in 1897 the show was extended to the Wednesday as well. The whole week was usually taken as a holiday in local industries, including the shoe trade, and no factories were open before Thursday. Since the demise of Race Week in 1883, the Bank Holiday week had become all the more important in the local calendar, and the Flower Show was to provide a central event for it.

Entries from nationally-known gardeners such as B. Williams of London and Macindo of East Yorkshire made the show at once more than a purely local affair, although there were still classes for amateurs and cottagers. The local gentry continued their vicarious rivalry as their gardeners vied with one another in roles comparable to those of jockeys. By 1906, 250 entrants presented 1,715 exhibits, but it does not seem that there was a large entry by working men. The show was extended by the annual exhibition of the Leicester Beekeepers' Association from 1887,[57] but after 1889, the Leicester Rowing Club held its regatta, initially an attraction at the show on a different day.

From the beginning, the committee made provision for three bands to play and for a balloon ascent, and crowds were attracted from all over the Midlands. In 1896, it could be claimed that 'There is now no more popular institution in Bank Holiday Week ...',[58] and nearly all the best exhibitors in England were to be found among the entries. Although other flower shows had been discontinued, it was not until 1897 that the committee decided to widen the range of entertainments by organising a variety show, at the same time extending the event over two days. The receipts suggest that after losses due to capital outlay, the expanded show had greater popular appeal.[59] (Table 2.4). Yet despite the appearance of entertainments such as Catlin's Royal Pierrots, a concert party, the show continued to be justified in terms indistinguishable from those of 40 years before. In 1900, the Leicester Daily Post praised it for

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57. LDP 3.8.1887; 9.8.1906; 3.8.1887.
58. LDP, 7.8.1886; 9.8.1895; 5.8.1896.
59. LDP 9.8.1906.

'the inculcation of enthusiasm for floriculture and horticulture among the artisan classes of the town'. The Mayor, Windley, was pleased that the show was 'away from the influence of the public house'.[60]

There are signs that the popularity of this municipal event was declining in the last years before the First World War although bad weather and the declaration of war itself can explain some of the lower crowd figures. Even so, the Abbey Park Flower Show, like the De Montfort Hall and the municipal band concerts represent the achievement of an officially sponsored culture, informed but not overwhelmed by the values of rational recreation and the temperance movement, which became genuinely popular from c.1890 to 1914. Although serviced by the council and its committees, the running costs were borne by admissioncharges, and there was no commitment to subsidy after initial capital investment, beyond the salaries of officials.

v. Park development after 1877

Dr. John Barclay had linked the need for open spaces to health in 1864, and feared that, at the time of rapidly growing population, that the town was

> limiting the amount of breathing space to the inhabitants, and are thereby sowing seeds of decrepitude, of disease and death that will produce all to certain a harvest.[61]

But it was not until 1885 that the sanitary argument came to the fore. In that year, the new Medical Officer of Health, H.Y. Tomkins, considered that the town was 'not badly provided' with parks, although there was

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60. Cf. London's Victoria Park, where pubs were soon built opposite all of the gates. Poulsen, op.cit., p.37.

61. Dr. J. Barclay, op.cit.

a great need for open spaces in the densest areas of population which could be partially alleviated by the use of churchyards.[62] This new interest was made easier by the solution of the sewage problem and the advance of flood prevention schemes. Spinney Hill Park, opened before a crowd of 20,000 in 1886,[63] was the last of Dare's dangerous areas to be reclaimed by the council, and future park development was never justified in terms of moral purification. The Allotment Act of 1887 and the flood prevention scheme of 1888[64] were further opportunities for municipal action to preserve open spaces, but there followed a gap of 14 years between the opening of Spinney Hill Park and the next major park, Western Park.

The cultural conflict inherent in the development of Abbey Park was absent from the controversy over the West End park. The form public open spaces were to take was already agreed upon among those with any influence in the matter, and while the formal layout of Abbey Park was not to be repeated elsewhere, its regulations were taken over in each case.[65] The conflict was now within the council, and concerned the role the municipal authority was to take in the development of new areas of the town and, in particular, to what extent ratepayers' money was to be used to benefit neighbourhood interests.

The need for a new recreation ground in the West End was felt after 1875 and led in 1879 to a request for the Sanitary Committee to investigate potential sites. Tenants of the Bedehouse Meadows were given notice

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62. Medical Officer of Health Report 1885.
63. ibid. CM1/20:9.6.85; CM1/21:30.3.1886; 20.9.1886; CM1/14:30.3.1875.
64. Medical Officer of Health Report 1888.
65. Medical Officer of Health Report 1887, p.45.

to quit in 1880, and the land was to serve as a recreation ground without undergoing development as a park proper.[66] A later plan to turn the ground into a park was abandoned due to the projection of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway (the Great Central) in 1892.[67] By that time, the Council was embroiled in an argument over the merits of purchasing the Westcotes Estate, the property of the Rev. J.M. Harris, adjacent to the Narborough Road, and the last major area of undeveloped land adjoining the town on the West side. The estate came up for sale in 1885, and Alderman Barfoot suggested the council should purchase it, developing the grounds as a park.[68] Opposition to the proposal came from Councillor Underwood, who wanted the estate used for building land, and who claimed that

> It would seem as if the Council had taken leave of their senses in this matter of providing places for recreation, and to be quite incapable of resisting the temptation to secure a pretty place at an extravagant price ...

There were already several parks elsewhere in the town, he argued, and the West End people could walk along the Narborough Road, across the fields to Braunstone or to the New Parks. Underwood suggested that, in any case, little use was made of the parks unless there was a special event, and a further one would be surplus to requirements. The Sanitary Committee's sub-committee negotiated to buy the estate for £38,100, but the full committee rejected the proposal.[69] Nevertheless, medical opinion suggested that the West End needed a park,[70] and alternatives were sought.

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66. CM1/17:26.8.1879.
67. CM1/14:28.7.1891.
68. LJ 15.5.1885.
69. CM1/20:9.6.1885.
70. Medical officer of Health Report 1888.

The failure of the Bedhouse Meadows scheme led to the purchase of an 11 acre site with the proceeds of the sale of the land to the Great Central Railway Co. in 1896, and a new recreation ground was laid out.[71] Further negotiations for parts of the Westcotes Estate filed to win council approval in the same year, and were rejected 34-17. The following year, Sir Thomas Wright, who had supported previous schemes, opened negotiations with the owner of the New Parks Estate, Mellor, for a 174 acre site, which became Western Park *in 1899.*[72] *The land, was not only more extensive* than the Westcotes *estate, it was also outside the built-up area and* offered little immediate interest as building land. It could, however, be justified in the long term as offering to improve the environment of potential sites on the West side of the town. The purchase could be less closely identified as an attempt to satisfy the demands of voters in the Westcotes ward, or to benefit the wealthy citizens living along the Narborough Road. Small portions of the Westcotes estate were given by the Harris family as a recreation ground and a rest garden in 1904, but the bulk of the estate was built on during the 1890s and 1900s.[73]

Similar arguments, on a lesser scale, concerned the purchase of 20 acres of land in Aylestone Ward between 1898 and 1902. Eventually a public meeting at the Working Men's Club and Institute in Saffron Lane and a petition to the council precipitated action.[74]

Underwood's comments about the under-use of the parks is no doubt exaggerated, but suggests that the meditative, religiose purpose envisaged

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71. CM1/29:28.1.1896; 28.7.1896.
72. CM1/30:25.5.1897; 25.7.1899.
73. CM1/37:27.9.1904.
74. CM1/31:26.7.1898; CM1/36:23.11.1902.

by their early advocates was not attractive to the bulk of the population. The later parks were not principally botanic gardens as Abbey Park was, but founded their popular appeal on bands, picknicking and, in particular, organised sport. Western Park, at the end of a tramline out of town, offered a suitable destination for Bank Holiday and Sunday excursions, and was an amenity for the whole town in this respect. On August Bank Holiday Monday, 1906, the trams leading to it were crowded, and while the pavillion did a roaring trade and the Excelsior Band played, two policemen looked on over a wholly law-abiding crowd.[75] The Park offered cricket and, in 1909, 30 football pitches.[76] The following year, the council opened a municipal 9-hole golf course on the park, and the Parks committee were satisfied that it was 'very extensively used' in its first year, with 267 annual tickets issued at 21/- and a further 49 at the artisan's rate of 5/-.[77]

vi. Open spaces: conclusion

The provision of public open spaces in 19th century Leicester was carried out in three phases. To 1875, the Council, in conjunction with private individuals (e.g. Luke* Turner) or voluntary bodies (e.g. the Racecourse committee) secured access to land suitable for recreation grounds. In some cases, the plots had previously been open to the public without any regulation. The new recreation grounds, seen by the council as compensation for the loss of open space elsewhere in the town due

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75. LDP 4.8.1906.

76. CM1/42:28.9.1909.

77. CM1/44:31.1.1911.

* Archibald? - p 105

to building development, were subject to restrictive bye-laws, but no effort was made to dictate how the park was to be used within those limits. In the second phase, represented by the Abbey Park, the panoply of Victorian landscape gardening was mobilised in order to create a park for promenades, floral displays and band concerts, where the commercial entertainments of other recreation grounds were admitted belatedly. The park's promoters went beyond arguments for health needs and counter-attractions to try to create an environment which would be spiritually uplifting in itself. The moment of such optimism soon passed, and in the third phase, parks were again largely functional. The council had already provided for cricket on the Racecourse (Victoria Park) and St. Margaret's Pasture, not it became a major provider of facilities for other sports too, notably football and swimming, but also golf. New parks, such as Western Park, were still the resort of large crowds for picnics and promenades in the last decades before 1914, but the requirements of organised leisure were an increasingly important consideration. It was only in this third phase, coinciding as it did with major borough extensions, that the park movement escaped from the domination of middle-class reformers seeking to recolonise areas dangerously free from effective supervision. Park-keepers and policemen alike were to ensure that such authority was not to be seriously threatened after 1882.

Chapter 3

Religious Organisations and Recreation

With their plethora of guilds, sewing circles, bazaars, temperance auxiliaries, societies for young people, missions and festivals, religious organisations played a major part in provision for non-work time in 19th century Britain. As Yeo notes, they were 'the most local, universally available and accessible voluntary organisations in the society',[1] comparable in their ubiquity to pub and corner shop. Wright's Directory lists 118 places of worship in Leicester in 1911, ranging from the wealthy archidiaconal church of St. Martin's to small Christadelphian meeting halls and the plain chapels of independent Calvinist congregations.[2] Most had given rise to a wide range of sub-organisations of devotional, fund-raising or recreational character. The purpose of the present chapter is to assess the contribution of churches to the development of recreation. Three main areas will be dealt with. Firstly, evidence is discussed concerning levels of religious attendance. While studies have generally contrasted time spent in religious observance with that devoted to leisure, the point is made that there are congruities between churchgoing and attendance at public entertainments. This is the more so given changes in services, in many churches made deliberately more attractive and accessible to their audience in the later 19th century. Special attention is given to missions and revivals, which sought to make special appeal to those outside the ambit of churchgoing. Such bodies as the Salvation Army and the Wesleyan Temperance Hall mission made, if for only a short time,

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1. Yeo 1976, p.51.

2. See Appendix II.

the greatest impact of any religious organisations on the culture of the poorest, least organised sections of the working class. Secondly, there is an examination of a number of specific initiatives by religious organisations. The section deals first with two bodies, the Unitarian Domestic Mission and the ritualist St. Paul's Church, which were widely influential in the nature of their provision and in their contrasting attitude to the inter-relationship of religious organisations and popular culture. It then goes on to describe three types of activity which had strategic importance for the involvement of religious organisations in the provision of recreation, namely men's associations, youth work and bazaars, in the last of which the issue of churches' engagement with the market is raised starkly. Finally, the chapter turns away from provision of recreational activities to the critique of popular culture. The implications of changing middle class religious observance for attitudes to entertainment are discussed before the specific nature of religious organisations' engagement with the drink question and Sabbatarianism are outlined.

The abundance of sources and organisations to study means that this chapter cannot aim to be a complete account. It is rather a series of case studies, which are not presented in chronological order, which serve to illustrate a number of points of significance for the thesis as a whole. Given that recreation, rather than religious organisations, is the main subject of the study, its main aim is to show how attitudes and practices generated within religious organisations contributed to the creation of a specific environment for the development of entertainment industries and recreational provision. But religious organisations were in turn responsive to changes in the society in which they moved, and were themselves providers of leisure facilities on a large scale, a role of some importance for the present study.

Previous work in the field is dominated by Yeo's study of Reading, in which he goes beyond a view which reduces religion to a passive element in late 19th century society, inevitably losing out to forces such as 'secularisation' or to the material challenge of commercial entertainment. Yeo observes that the churches held their own in absolute membership and in their visibility, but failed to expand along with the growth of population. Their sensation of failure was exaggerated, intensified by their past experience and by the desire to reach a mass membership. The urge to extend the boundaries of the church to those of society itself, always fundamental to Anglicanism, became the response of most religious organisations, involving them in a range of missionary and then recreational works which ultimately overwhelmed their original purpose. As Yeo observes,

> It was as if "institutional churches" were attempting to become microcosmic totalities, thus bravely harking back to a whole set of aspirations and organisations in the wider society just at the time when those aspirations were receiving a severe battering from larger social forces.[3]

The self-consciously medievalist stance of Anglican ritualists fits this pattern closely, but it is not applicable in every case. There is tension between sub-organisations created to involve members unlimited and those which served the desire of members for the communal security of a sub-culture. Cunningham sees these as historically distinct phases of the involvement of religious organisations with leisure in the period 1850-75, when they shifted emphasis from counter attractions and recruitment to 'a seemingly innocent provision of amusement for the congregation itself'. As the sterner evangelicalism of the first half of the 19th century

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3. Yeo 1976, p.68.

subsided, leisure became acceptable to all but a few sectarians, a necessary aspect of church life. In Cunningham's words, 'Leisure called the tune and the churches danced to it'.[4] Religious observers were aware of the implied compromise. R.W. Dale asked 'are we mastering the world by the power of God and making it what God meant it to be, or is the world mastering us?'[5]

Yeo describes the subordination of ends to means, the endless fund-raising to pay for bricks and mortar itself on so grandiose a scale that continuous numerical expansion was necessary to fill the new buildings. Success came to be measured in numerical, not spiritual terms. Moreover, churches furthered the process of the nationalisation of culture which weakened the churches' influence. Their continual disaggregation of congregations into age- and sex-specific groups furthered divisive trends which cut across their own aims of social unity. Unlike Cunningham, Yeo sees this not as a simple reflex to the growth of leisure, but as a response, albeit a weak-willed one, to the development of society as a whole. The 'crisis' of 1890-1914 witnessed the shift from the vice-presidential/paternalistic and democratic models of voluntary organisations both of which were rooted in various forms of local business and control, towards those of quasi-business, sect and pressure group. Many religious organisations floundered as they failed to adapt.

Running through the work of both Yeo and Cunningham is a sense that religious organisations failed. As Yeo points out, this was sensed by their own personnel, and resulted in part from the impossibility of

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4. Cunningham, op.cit., pp.180, 182.

5. K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (1963) p.70.

their aim of all-inclusiveness. The failure involved the fatalistic acceptance of hegemonic directions of change when there were alternatives. Yet it is more fruitful in evaluating the contribution of religious bodies to the cultural life of the town to adopt a more positive approach, not to see denominationalism as a poor substitute for the dominant role of nonconformity in the 1840s or of the Church at some unspecified time in the Middle Ages. For the study of recreation, rather than of religion itself, the bazaar and the Saturday evening entertainment take on a new significance. They became more than petty distractions from the serious business of devotion. In so far as these pursuits involved time and energy, they represent significant social activities, deserving as serious consideration as commercial ventures which, because of their continued growth in the 20th century are too easily seen as inevitable victors. Sub-organisations provided for many a sense of community and opportunities for sociability, which, if less deliberately devotional than many ministers may have wished, represented a powerful presence in society.

Studies of 19th century religion have generally sought to explain an absence - that of the working and lower-middle classes from churches in large numbers.[6] Analysis of the religious census of 1851 and subsequent newspaper surveys[7] may give some indication of the extent of churchgoing, itself a poor measure of religiosity, but understates the impact of religious organisations on popular culture. The spasmodic

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6. D. Thompson, op.cit.; Hugh Macleod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City (1974); Geoffrey Best, Mid-Victorian Britain, pp.197ff.

7. Leicester's survey was carried out by the Leicester Daily Post, appearing in LDP 26.11.81. It is discussed in D. Thompson, op.cit. and W. Lancaster, op.cit., ch. 5.

nature of revivalism and the tendency of missions to attract to their sub-organisations those for whom church-going was alien alike had no impact on censuses. It is clear that a great many more went to church-sponsored lectures, clubs and entertainments than attended church regularly, and one is left with the question of how far the religious content of such provision was perceived by audiences. McLeod produces evidence of very instrumental attitudes to settlements and missions on the part of the inhabitants of Bethnal Green[8] (and of the instrumentality of attendance for the 'respectable' classes), but whereas such a matter is central to the investigation of working-class attitudes to the church, it is secondary, though not unimportant for the present study.

As well as the question as to how far recipients thought of themselves as entering actively into church life, one should ask how church-provided recreational facilities differed from those offered by others, in content, form, price, status and attractiveness. It is as necessary to discuss the attraction and importance to over 1,000 people of a concert held by the West End Men's Own Society in the Robert Hall Memorial Chapel in 1908 as it is to account for why only 100 attended Bond Street Congregational Church on a Sunday morning in 1899.[9]

## A. Sociability and religious observation

### i. Attendance and allegiance

The main trends in religious attendance in Leicester have been analysed by David Thompson,[10] and follow broadly predictable lines. Church attendance was, by national standards, high in Leicester (in common

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8. McLeod, op.cit., pp.112-14.

9. LG 4.11.99; Robert Hall Memorial Baptist Church Magazine, November 1908.

10. D. Thompson, op.cit.

with the East Midlands as a whole) with a high proportion of dissenters in 1851. By 1881, growth had failed to keep pace with population.[11] Church attendance was higher in better-off districts (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 .

Church Attendance in 1881. Selected wards.

| Ward | IM | Pop. | Percentage CofE | RC | Nonc. | Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N & Middle St. Margarets | 160+ | 47,208 | 8.3 | 1.8 | 6.9 | 11.0 | 28.0 |
| E. St. Mary's | 130 | 35,429 | 19.2 | 3.7 | 34.3 | 9.2 | 66.4 |

Source: McLeod 1973

Lancaster notes in particular the relative decline of the major nonconformist denominations between 1851 and 1881 and the growth of lesser sects, including Spiritualism, the Plymouth Brethren and the Church of Christ, as well as evangelical movements such as the Salvation Army. These were particularly attractive, he suggests, to migrant workers at a time of rapid urban growth.[12] The sapping of nonconformist strength with defections to the Church of England as well as widely noted indifference, may be taken as evidence that Leicester in the 1880s was no longer the metropolis of dissent which it had been half a century before. Nevertheless, it will be suggested that there remained a reservoir of potential support for nonconformity of considerable strength, both for its newer evangelical forms and in a reviving Wesleyanism, and that the cultural influence of nonconformity as mediated by leading members of congregations and

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11. Hugh McLeod, 'Class, Community and Region; The Religious Geography of Nineteenth-century England', A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in England, vol. 6 (1973).

12. Lancaster, op.cit.

ministers remained influential until the end of the period. To some extent, the loss of dominance was compensated for by the organised stridency of the churches' pressure groups, such as the Sunday School Union.

Contemporaries were aware of the low attendances in many places of worship. The Leicester Daily Post observed in 1881 that

> it appears to us that bricks and mortar are amply sufficient for the temples built with hands and more than enough and what is needed is living stones built into the temple of redeemed humanity.[13]

While some ministers questioned both the ethics and the accuracy of the LDP survey, it seems to have commanded general acceptance. F.B. Meyer, minister of Melbourne Hall, questioned the allowance made for double sittings, adding 6,000 more to the aggregate estimate of 30,000 individual attendances.[14] There were many observations in later years that attendance only once a day was becoming more common. The vicar of St. Nicholas noted in 1905 'The growing habit of attending Divine service once on a Sunday, and not twice ...' while the incumbent of St. Peter's felt 'the feeling of obligation or duty much weakened, especially on Sunday morning'.[15] A major difference observed between working-class and middle-class practice by the writer of the Leicester Guardian's 'Round the Churches' column in 1899-1901 was the smaller congregations in working-class districts on Sunday mornings, even where evening attendances might be quite large.[16] Late Saturday shopping was suggested as an explanation, although elsewhere Sunday morning was used as an opportunity to be free of children sent to Sunday school.

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13. LDP 26.11.81.

14. LDP 28.11.81.

15. Diocese of Peterborough, Episcopal Visitation Returns 1905. Leicester, St. Nicholas; Leicester, St. Peter's.

16. e.g. Clarendon Park Baptists, LG 7.4.1900; Bond St. Congregational Church, LG 4.11.99; Crown St. Primitive Methodists, LG 14.9.1901.

At mid-century, church and chapel life had provided the centre of sociability for much of Leicester's middle class. The dynastic marriages which kept social and economic power in relatively few families until the 1870s were facilitated by chapel going, tea parties and walks at such prestigious institutions as the Unitarian Great Meeting and the Belvoir St. Chapel. As families such as the Corahs, Gees, Tollers, Faires, Russells and Viccars went over to the established church, and as a wide range of social activities became acceptable, this role declined in the upper ranks of urban society.[17] For the subaltern classes to whom religious leadership devolved, churchgoing may have been, as in McLeod's analysis, only one of a number of circles to which membership was not obligatory, but there still remained the support of a substantial middle class for religious organisations throughout the period. In the growing western suburbs of the town, with a socially mixed population, the patronage of factory owners lay behind the building of Thorpe St. Chapel and its successor, the imposing Emanuel Church, with which the hosier Richard Harris and the elastic web manufacturer Archibald Turner, were involved as patrons.[18] Although St. Paul's church nearby was built by the Leicester

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17. cf. the increased respectability of the theatre after c.1880. Freer mentions the popularity of golf and motoring among the wealthier middle class. Freer op.cit. ch. 6.

18. The origins of Thorpe St. chapel are described in the congregational minute book (LRO 24D 72/1):-

> In the year 1853 a few christian friends residing in Braunstone Gate, commenced holding cottage meetings on Saturday afternoons, for the purpose of mutual edification, and encouragement, which were continued until they assumed a character of sufficient importance, to warrant the exercise of more distinctive feature of Public Worship: to promote an end so desirable, the chapel situated in Thorpe St., belonging to the Wesleyan Methodists, was purchased by Mr. Richard Harris and placed at their disposal: the Sunday school, numbering about 60 children already connected with the place, being accepted by them.

Until 1856, services were conducted by town missionaries. After that date, Harris had a regular pastor installed.

Archidiaconal Church Extension Society, the land was provided by W.W. Stretton JP, and another resident of the area, the elastic web manufacturer Luke Turner was a patron. In such cases, church patronage could become an aspect of the urban paternalism otherwise relatively attenuated in Leicester.

Only from the 1890s on did the migration outwards of the middle-class pose a major threat to town centre churches. The Leicester Guardian series identified a number of cases of apparently middle-class churchgoers returning to town centre places of worship such as at Christ Church and St. Andrew's.[19] This was less obviously the case with churches in areas from which the better-off members of the working class had migrated. Thus the Great Meeting still had a following of 200 'distinguished citizens' in 1900 and St. Mary's maintained 'a well-to-do and intellectual body'.[20] Bishop Street, the oldest Wesleyan chapel in the town had made a major effort to counter the effects of migration from the town centre in the 1890s. In 1892, it was reported that 'Unhappily, for a number of years, slowly but surely, it has been drifting in the direction of what is termed a "City Chapel"'[21] and foresaw being reduced before long to a mission. It was able to escape such a fate as a result of the centralised structure of Wesleyanism, and established a role as a kind of Methodist cathedral

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19. LG, 1.9.1900; 22.6.1901. On this phenomenon in Huddersfield, see Richard Dennis and Stephen Daniels, '"Community" and the Social Geography of Victorian Cities', Urban History Yearbook, (1981). There is little evidence in Leicester to support the contention that allegiance to particular theological positions was the main force behind continued attendance at town-centre churches by suburban dwellers.

20. LG, 28.7.1900; 1.11.1899.

21. WM 1.1902.

church, holding a large number of special services for devotional missions and revivals, and attracting a town-wide congregation. Most of the Wesleyan initiatives of the 1890s and 1900s had their base there while its social exclusivity was maintained by centring evangelical work among the working class at the Temperance Hall Mission.

Other nonconformist churches did not have such a course open to them. Bond St., the earliest congregationalist church to split off from the Great Meeting, found itself marooned in an increasingly impoverished working-class district, and was by 1910 wholly reconciled to a missionary role. Other churches uprooted themselves completely, as in the case of the Unitarian Free Church, inaugurated in a schoolroom in Wellington Street in 1866, which in 1901 moved to a new site on the Narborough Rd., with the deliberate aim of tapping the lower middle class and artisan suburban development then taking place.[22]

Much of the financial and spiritual crisis of 1890-1914 in town centre churches was the outcome of the loss of middle-class parishioners and members. The Baptists seem to have suffered particularly as, like the Church of England, they had several substantial city centre premises dating from their heyday in mid-century and earlier, and in two cases back to the 17th century. In March 1900, Archdeacon Lane baptist church reported to the East Midlands conference that

> in common with many of our sister churches, we deeply regret the continued indifference of so large a proportion of the people around us to the duties of religion and public worship, and this notwithstanding the special efforts put forth to reach and interest them.[23]

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22. Bond St. Yearbook 1910. LG 27.1.1900; 21.4.1900; 30.3.1901.

23. Archdeacon Lane Baptist Church minutes 7.3.1900.

Some congregations established new suburban buildings, and the two would then preserve organisational links which could be exploited to the financial benefit of the older church. Thus Harvey Lane members in the west end built the Robert Hall Memorial Baptist Church in 1900. For those left behind, the prospect could be a harsh one if the missionary role was for any reason difficult to adopt. This was especially the case for the Church of England, and several incumbents note the trend in visitational reports from 1901 onwards. The structure of the CofE involved few of the better-off working class in church management, and there was little formal tie to keep them attached. The vicar of All Saints reported in 1905 that 'As individuals become more prosperous they move out to the suburbs, and their connection with All Saints is necessarily broken'.[24] But that was not necessarily the case. St. John's in 1910 reported that many old parishioners kept in touch despite migration.[25] Church affiliation could cut across community and neighbourhood allegiances. The effect was variable, depending on the social status of those involved and the closensss of their identification with the life of the church.

ii. Services

The central feature of most religious services was the sermon. In Obelkevich's words, they 'gratified popular thirst for eloquence'.[26] Star preachers and prominent public figures could attract very large

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24. Episcopal Visitation Returns 1905. Leicester All Saints.
25. ibid. 1910. Leicester, St. John's.
26. J. Obelkevich, Religion and Rural Society (Oxford 1976).

audiences. In 1889, the Rev. Dr. Dallinger drew crowds to Bishop St. by his fame as a man of science, and his sermons were 'masterpieces of consecrated eloquence of thought and feeling and diction'.[27] Local ministers of note, such as F.B. Meyer, A.A. Isaacs or D. Vaughan could regularly attract large congregations and even an established clergyman with the ability to speak well in a lesser church could improve attendances, as did the Rev. Llewellyn Parsons at Emanuel Church. Some observers went as far as to claim that the secret of raising attendances lay largely in the presentation of the service, with a prominent place given to the sermon. In 1881, the LDP editorial on the census concluded from the relative success of different institutions that neither doctrine nor the personality of the minister was crucial, but rather that 'the attraction of free and unconventional services, with no starch, plenty of music, and plain, earnest, homely talk, salted with a little humour' was the secret of large numbers.[28] By this time, many nonconformist churches had installed organs or at least harmoniums, begun floral and choral services and ministers less often structured sermons on the old pattern of dividing the text. The effect may not ultimately have been success, since less formal delivery demanded greater individual flair. By 1900, the author of 'Round the Churches' considered that 'the preaching of Leicester is at a rather low ebb'. He thought it was still too often dogmatic, better suited to the less sophisticated audiences of earlier

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27. WM 7.1889.

28. LDP 30.11.81.

days, poorly prepared, factually weak and wrapped in churchy phraseology.[29] There were some good individual efforts. The congregation of the Andrews Street Church of Christ heard from a visitor, J.T. Johnson of Birmingham, 'the sort of sermon which would improve the effect of many of our church and chapel services, and induce many more thinking men and women to attend them'.[30] At an earlier period, at least, some of the congregation would choose between churches almost as a later generation would choose between cinemas, depending upon what was on offer. M. Quin, later a secularist full-time worker, was an office clerk in Leicester between 1865 and 1881, and recalled visiting both the broad church St. Martin's, to hear Vaughan, and the high church St. Mary's. Yet by the end of the century, it is probable that such connoisseurship of sermons was rare. William Stanyon, Methodist, temperance advocate and ex-councillor, doubted if sermons were of any importance in attracting congregations by 1901. People attended church from habit rather than for pleasure, he thought.[31]

Not all denominations followed the route to brighter services. Even at the turn of the century, some congregations clung fast to old forms, with no apparent loss of support. These were independent Calvinist chapels those which most closely resembled Reading's Zoar Particular Baptists.[32] The LG reporter noted of the Zion Chapel, Erskine St.,

> as soon as one gets into the place one seems to be breathing an old-world religious atmosphere. Just as these Erskine St. Calvinists worshipped, so, surely, worshipped our Puritan ancestors.

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30. LG 30.3.1901.

31. M. Quin, Memoirs of a Positivist (1924). LG 5.1.1901.

32. Yeo 1976, pp. 145-6.

The proceedings were typified by a 'fixed earnestness'; there was no choir, and the clerk read through the whole of a hymn first as well as verse by verse before it was sung. Prayers were long, and the sermon was an old-fashioned exegesis of the Song of Songs. Despite all this, the congregation of 300 compared well with many more modern services elsewhere, and included many young people.[33] A similar service was held for less than 100 people at the Providence Chapel (f.1845) in Newarke St.[34] The attraction of these lesser churches, 'the quiet, unostentatious little meeting-houses of crowded neighbourhoods' was in their intimate community feeling, often in hostile surroundings. At places such as Crown St. Primitive Methodist Church, where 30 or 40 met in a tiny building 'everybody seems so much more homely and family-like than in a large place of worship, if a good deal more uncouth, is a good deal more earnest'.[35]

While small churches could survive in this way, the larger nonconformist bodies were caught up in trends which were felt to be carrying them away from their roots. In part, the worldly success of Wesleyans and Primitives alike threatened the intimate forms of class meeting and love-feast, as well as the public display of outdoor meetings and street-processions with their disturbance of respectable tranquility. There are signs of a retreat from display in Leicester nonconformity after 1850, but there was also resistance to it. David Thompson notes Baptist fears of the decline of the class meeting in the 1870s, and there were many examples

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33. LG 27.7.1901.

34. LG 2.12.1899.

35. LG 14.9.1901. Cf., the description of the Free Gospel Hall, Causeway Lane as one of 'the quiet, unostentatious little meeting-houses of crowded neighbourhoods', LG, 9.12.1899.

of Saturday and weekly prayer meetings giving way to guilds, bible classes, temperance meetings and, in the 1880s, to wholly recreational occasions. At Friar Lane Baptist Church, class meetings were revived in 1869 and made fortnightly, later compulsory for new members in their first two years.[36] Yet Friar Lane was unusual in its resistance to change, introducing few new ventures, with the result that its minister, George Kilby, resigned in 1910 over lack of support for his initiatives. More typical was the experience of the Humberstone Rd. Wesleyan Circuit, which reported in 1889 that the class meeting was 'often so neglected that the membership is represented rather by the name in the book, and on the Quarterly Ticket, than by attendance at the class'.[37] Debate followed about the best way to revive class meetings, but it was generally felt that it could not be done on the old model, that more freedom was required, with the class leader in a less domineering role and less recourse to the formulae of contrition. By the 1890s, the functions of the class meeting were to some extent fulfilled by the Wesley Guilds which most societies set up. Such attempts to formalise the intimacy which had characterised early Methodism did not meet with universal approval. In 1904, Rev. Lloyd Jones reflected on the last 40 years of the history of Saxe Coburg church and concluded that 'One old-fashioned class-meeting ... was worth a score of Wesley Guilds as a spiritual influence'.[38]

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36. D. Thompson, op.cit., p.230. Friar Lane church minutes, 16.10.1869; 17.7.1878. Cf. Obelkevich, op.cit., p.219, 'The transition to the modern situation occurred when growing class consciousness, growing concern for respectability, and the growing self-consciousness ... made impossible, particularly for the middle class, the self-expression required by the class meeting and revival meeting'.

37. WM 7.1889.

38. WM 1.1903. The editor considered that 'Mr. Jones made no allowance for the civic, philanthropic, educational, political and literary work which has so vastly increased among Methodists'. This would presumably have been taken by Lloyd Jones as proving his point. On the bureaucratisation of Methodism, see Obelkevich, op.cit., pp.184ff.

The same issue confronted more starkly Leicester's Primitive Methodists. David Thompson sees their revival meetings and special meetings in the 1860s and '70s as bridging the gap between outdoor meetings earlier in the century and the renewed popular mission work of the Hallelujah Band and the Salvation Army in the late 1870s. In the 1880s, the Primitives still held camp meetings, although these increasingly took the form of annual excursions to rural societies. Revivals were still frequent, but, as elsewhere, no longer the spontaneous affairs of pioneering days. As for other nonconformist groups, the 1890s and 1900s presented the Primitives with opportunities of church extension, as with the building of the new church and schools on the Hinckley Road in 1900, but without a corresponding quickening of public interest. One response was to reassert the value of old methods, rather than to turn to new ones. A preacher asked in 1890,

> may not our little success be due to the non-use of our "methods", than to their unfitness and antiquity? There is a certain genius ... about our Methodism. It would be fettered by the adoption of some "Methods" which are popular in certain quarters. Have we outgrown the Class Meeting and the Sabbath Evening Prayer Meeting?

Yet in practical terms, there could be no going back to the old spirit, and the Primitives, in common with other denominations, put efforts into cottage meetings and open-air work. The results were a failure to reach many of the unconverted, and a sense of diffusion of energy. 'Popular services for the people', picnics and evening entertainments all took the place of more intense devotion; the entertainments, it was hoped, would 'prove more attractive and afford a larger revenue'. But the old feeling lingered on in some quarters that the Primitive Methodist Church should play a more positive role, that 'we are saved to serve, and if the people will not come to us, we must go to them'.[39]

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39. PQ, 4.85; 7.88; 10.88; 8.90; 7.92; 1.93; 4.1901; 4.1903; 7.1903.

B. Missions and revivals

i. Evangelical religion in the 1870s

A general picture of declining nonconformist influence and zeal, the withering away of dissent as the focus of an alternative culture, dominates views of religion in the later 19th century. Gilbert claims that

> The pretensiously middle class ethos of the emerging Victorian Nonconformists, the preoccupation with order, respectability and style, reinforced the external societal pressures cutting Methodist Congregationalist and Baptist communities adrift from the lower sections of the social constituency ...[40]

While it is true that major growth in Leicester churches took place in the suburbs, where such values could be given free play, most denominations were also aware of their relationship with the working class. The relative compactness of the town and the mission work traditions established by the Unitarians in the 1840s, and reinforced by Vaughan's educational work in the 1860s, as well as the activities of town missionaries from the 1850s, meant that class relations were never ignored. Moreover, the old dissenting bodies were in a special position in Leicester since the Baptists, not the Wesleyans, were the most popular nonconformist group, and the early establishment of chapels meant that Congregationalists and Baptists were soon aware of changing residential patterns in the socially declining areas around their churches. In addition, the late 1870s and 1880s saw the powerful impact on Leicester of renewed evangelism by the Salvation Army, the Gospel Temperance Movement and by Meyer's mission at Melbourne Hall, creating an environment in which established

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40. A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England (1976), p.162.

churches launched their own missionary ventures. A large migratory population and continued irregularity of employment in trades organised on a pre-factory model provided the social milieu for a vigorous popular religion in the last quarter of the 19th century, but which remained an important element in the lives only of a minority. Even so, mission halls, house-to-house visitation, out-door services and street processions were to become significant features of popular culture in many parts of the town. That they did not always establish or sustain religious practice as their supporters wished should not lead us to underestimate their importance.

The 1870s were a decade of considerably increased religious activity in Leicester. The Anglican church extension society built St. Paul's and St. Saviour's in 1872, the former becoming the centre of social life in its suburban neighbourhood. The Wesleyans, enjoyed a boom in membership between 1873 and 1876 linked to a major programme of church building, for the first time extending beyond the central Bishop St. Chapel, with new chapels in Aylestone Road and (a temporary building at first) King Richard's Road, new schools for Bishop Street and a mission church in Albert Street. The extension was seen as the result of a democratic effort, the Wesleyan Messenger commenting that

> the buildings now in the course of erection in this circuit will stand a hundred years hence, not as monuments of the munificence of one rich man, but as evidence of cheerful gifts of money or service from a united and willing people.

But the hope that new chapels would create their own demand was only partly realised, and by 1876, a district revival, with open-air services was planned to win new members. Even so, the results were disappointing.[41]

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41. WM 4.1874; 10.1876; 1.1877.

Even the old dissenting chapels were stirred into action during the 1870s. In 1872, Friar Lane Baptists tried recruiting members in factories and warehouses, and two years later reopened Carley St as a mission chapel. Bond St. Congregationalists had already begun open-air services in Sanvey Gate after week-night services in 1866, and in 1876 began to distribute copies of the Bond St. Almanac to houses in the neighbourhood as a means of encouraging local interest.[42] All such efforts suggest that leaders of churches felt the need to reach a wider public, to break out from their own religious communities, but it was left to the charismatic evangelism of itinerant missionaries to win a substantial popular following, and to establish the methods and institutions which were to serve as models for the rest of the century.

The first stirrings of the revival associated with the visit of Moody and Sankey to England in 1875 is seen in the activities of workers such as one Mrs. Bass. She visited Leicester in March 1874 to write an article for The Christian and held services in a small mission church, where Sankey's hymns were sung. The following February she held a three-week mission in the Temperance Hall.[43] Catherine Booth carried out similar work. In 1876 she was in Leicester for two months and established a mission which was the basis of Leicester's Hallelujah Band.[44]

ii. The Salvation Army

The Hallelujah Band soon achieved notoriety in the town for its members' practice of singing at antisocial hours. It was reported that

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42. E.M. Drew, Those Taking Part 1802-1952 (Leicester 1952) pp.12ff.
43. J.V.B(ishop), She Walked with God (Leicester 1881).
44. C.B. Booth, Life of Catherine Booth (n.d. 1968), p.261.

120 members could on occasions be heard at 6.30am on Sunday morning, marching with banners and singing

> Oh I'm happy all the day
> Since He washed my sins away,
> And I never mean to grieve Him any more ...[45]

There were several critical letters to the press. It was perhaps not only from fear of the unknown that Salvationists were assaulted, although Leicester did not witness the Skeleton Army riots of southern towns. The only large-scale street battle occurred in October, 1885, after the Skeleton Army riots, and was apparently largely spontaneous.[46]

In January 1877, William Booth chaired a meeting of evangelists at the London headquarters of his Christian Mission. It was reported that Leicester had been 'one of the few bright spots visible to Bramwell Booth on his return from Scotland'. The subsequent history of the movement in Leicester led to an intense evangelical activity in the town which bridged the periods of national revivalism dated by Gilbert to 1874-6 and 1881-3.[47]

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45. ibid., p.265. LC 22.9.77. Cf Salvation Army Rule No. 7: 'In some residential neighbourhoods a procession without singing succeeds the best', St. John Ervine, God's Soldier, 2 vols. (1934).

46. A crowd had assembled at the London Road station to give the Salvation Army Life Guards, then on a national tour, a hostile reception. There is no mention that this was organised by publicans or others, but the possibility cannot be wholly ruled out. There is no indication that the hostility was intended to be other than verbal. Herbert Booth arrived with 160 Life Guards, and a huge crowd made the route along Belgrave Gate to the Foundry Square Salvation Warehouse impasable. A rush for the Salvationists' colours was started, in which Booth was unhorsed and about 20 Salvationists had their uniforms damaged. Only police intervention enabled them to proceed to their barracks. There was further hooting of Salvationists that evening as they returned from a rally at the Temperance Hall, and the following day they were again pelted in the street by roughs. From the press report, it is not possible to discern any motive. One of the two who were bound over for their part in the fight was a shoe laster from Argyle Street, off Belgrave Gate, but there was no suggestion at the hearing that he had been responsible for organising it. LC 10.10.85. For an incident in which the Rev. F.B. Meyer intervened to stop an individual Salvationalist from being beaten up, see W.D. Fullerton, F.B. Meyer (1929). On Salvation Army riots elsewhere, see Victor Bailey, 'The Dangerous Classes', University of Warwick Ph.D. 1975 and 'Salvation Army Riots, the "Skeleton Army" and Legal Authority in Provincial Towns' in Donajgrodzki (ed.) op.cit.

47. Ervine, op.cit p.376.

At some time in 1876, the senior evangelist of the Christian Mission, Abraham Lamb, had left to form a separate body, the Leicester Evangelical Mission, based in the Workmen's Hall in Halford Street. His motives are not stated, but it is clear that Robert Walker, a Glaswegian hosier who had settled in Leicester in 1830, and who was a member at various times of the Gallowtree Gate, Bond Street and Victoria Road churches, played an important part in the schism. The defection of Lamb was an important moment in the career of Booth as the crisis in Leicester was used to justify strong central leadership of the Christian Mission and the Salvation Army. His initial reaction was to send William Corbridge to Leicester. Together with his wife he seems to have injected renewed vigour into the flagging Hallelujah Band, and took over a disused property which was renamed 'The Salvation Warehouse'. In 12 months they claimed to have won over 1,300 sinners, and their meetings in their stark building attracted enthusiastic crowds. Despite Walker's support for the rival faction, Corbridge was able to enlist the aid of Wesleyans, Baptists and Quakers.[49] The methods of the Salvation Army challenged the assumptions of how best to communicate with working class audiences. They dispensed

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48. Ervine op.cit., pp. 376-77. For Robert Walker, see LC 21.7.83 and obituary LG 2.3.1901. Walker was described by Railton, Booth's missionary in Leicester, as 'another of those pious, rich men who were perpetually bothing Booth by their efforts to treat immortal souls as if they were hands in their factories'. Ervine loc.cit. Walker's efforts in this instance and at melbourne Hall later represent an effort to keep evangelical religion under the control of respectable Leicester nonconformists, and so more serviceable to wider social interests, rather than allowing it to be dominated by demagogic leaders from outside the town. See the account of the 5th anniversary of the Leicester Evangelical Mission, attended by councillors Lankester and Wilford, as well as Walker, and the Revs. Evans, Danzy Sheen, Mayer and Conyer. LC 3.3.82.

49. Ervine, op.cit. p.377. LC 23.2.78.

with lengthy sermons in the interest of short speeches interspersed with singing. No speech was permitted of over half a minute at outdoor meetings, whether it was made by mission workers or contrite sinners. Corbridge believed that 'the open-air service needs to be like the articles in our magazine, in paragraphs'.[50]

From 1881-83, the Salvation Warehouse was one of the foci of the Blue Ribbon Movement (see below) in Leicester. Subsequently, the Salvation Army seems to have maintained a less dynamic presence, accepted by the authorities and using the form of a popular denomination, albeit with less orthodox theology. In 1900, the Leicester Guardian reporter attended a meeting at the Army's Watling St. Hall, and found it 'the most strange of all our present day forms of Christian worship'. A procession of 50 or 60, two abreast, led to a hall adorned only with a portrait of William Booth where the band and choir were seated on a platform at one end. About 150 attended a service which was 'most free and easy in its methods', most unlike the quiet of most places of worship. The sermon was repetitive and shouted, the result of too much outdoor work, and was answered with cries of 'I believe it' and 'Hallelujah'. All concerned were involved in continuous activity. The reporter noted that

> Movement is, indeed, evidently one of the chief factors in the methods of a Salvation Army service. There is always something going on. Band playing, singing, confessions, prayers, collections, speeches, all follow in brisk order, so that nobody is allowed to get dull.[51]

The attraction of the Salvation Army lay in its forms of worship and its emotionalism. Its message was uncluttered with doctrinal or sectarian niceties. The same features were offensive not only to the proprieties

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50. Ervine, op.cit., p.389.

51. LG 30.6.1900. See also Inglis, op.cit., pp.176ff.

of middle class religious observance, but also to large sections of the working class. The Salvation Army's methods offered a new solution to the problem of reaching a wider population, but they were not a panacea. They demanded surrender of the intellect and submission to paramilitary authority which, despite its iconoclastic image, offered no challenge to the social structure. This was hardly a recipe for winning the support of self-educated working men. As J. Page Hopps observed,

> there are many among the defaulting "masses" ... to whom the services of Messrs Moody and Sankey were repugnant. Rightly or wrongly they could not "stand" them, and they would view with even greater abhorrence what they would call the sensational vagaries of the Hallelujah Bands, Salvation Armies, and companies of peripatetic religionists ...[52]

Page Hopps made an attempt to reach such people in 1879 and 1880 with his Temperance Hall Mission, while at Emanuel Church, Llewellyn Parsons began similar work. They share the proselytising aims of the Salvation Army, but using methods more akin to those of Dare's mission in All Saints' Parish. Both were centred around Sunday afternoon meetings which featured much singing, and, at the Temperance Hall, a brass band, together with addresses which retained the length of sermons, but which built ethical messages from conversational materials, with titles such as 'I press towards the mark', 'Paddle your own canoe' or 'Pepper's ghost'.[53] There was little to distinguish such meetings from later Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings. Emanuel Church encouraged the emergence of social gatherings from the Sunday afternoon services, both being seen as potential sources of new members.

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52. LC 20.11.80.

53. LC 27.11.80; 15.5.80.

iii. Missionary work after 1885

From the 1880s onwards, most churches increased their commitment to missionary work. For town centre churches the need was a pressing one, requiring re-evaluation of the forms of church activities. In 1882, the Rev. Morley Wright resigned the ministry of Bond Street Congregational Church to go to Lewisham, regretting that Bond Street had not followed his suggestion of not building anew in the prosperous Stoneygate suburb. He felt himself unequal to the task they had left themselves, adding that

> My strong conviction is that this Church will have to become ultimately much more of a mission church and that another minister of a different sort to myself, with different arrangements regarding seat-rents, and different methods of work and worship, will be able to reach the largely working class population in this neighbourhood ...[54]

Morley Wright's departure may be seen as part of the long process whereby Leicester's nonconformity lost many of the powerful voices so influential in public debate of the town's culture and morals, men who had articulated the social outlook of powerful congregations which were now breaking up geographically, economically and in denominational affiliation.

As new suburban churches were built, old premises might become mission churches, or new mission halls were built, sometimes as very temporary accommodation, as with 'tin missions' and converted cottages.[55] In old parts of the town, missions took on a charitable role, with soup kitchens, coal and clothing clubs, evening homes and shelters.[56] Branches of the Young People's Society for Christian Endeavour and mission bands undertook outdoor services throughout the town, involving largely young people, and combining the eagerness of suburbanites for mission work with the perceived need of dwellers in the centre for religious

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54. Bond St. Church minutes 7.6.82.

55. e.g. Palmerston St., Melbourne Hall Magazine December 1911.

56. e.g. Northgate St., WM 4.1886.

services. The attraction of the voluntary work was no doubt not always entirely devotional. Singing parties had a recreational function for participants. There are signs too that members could be easily deterred by difficulties. In 1888, it was said of the Bishop St. Mission Band

> now that the novelty of the work has worn off some of the members have grown weary in well-doing; some seem to think that the small audiences, which are almost a matter of course at cottage services, do not offer sufficient scope for their talents ...

Others, though, put people off with their excessive zeal.[57] Some of the more successful ventures seem to have been linked to small churches, probably relying on more local support than did the prestigious Bishop St. Bread St. Wesleyan Methodist Church organised its own revival in November 1906 when

> a number of workers, led by tbe Brass Band, marched through the streets of the Wyggeston Ward, pausing at intervals to give invitations to the people and returning to the hall at about 11.15. A considerable number of people entered the hall with us, and after a protracted application of the sobering influence of coffee and Sankey's hymns, were persuaded to listen to brief addresses.[58]

Such missionary work established halls which seem genuinely to have become foci of social life for some of the surrounding population, but for largely secular reasons.

The United missions which nonconformists promoted from the 1890s on could draw large crowds. That of 1901 had 5,000 at the main rally in the Floral Hall and 3,000 attended lesser meetings for policemen, trammers, shop workers, factory hands and dossers, but most were thought to be from amongst the converted. The Wesleyan Messenger concluded that

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57. WM 1.1888.

58. WM 1.1907.

'the Mission has re-emphasised the fact that there is a great gulf between the Churches and the masses of the people'.[59]

Even in the last decades of the period, there could still be successes for missions of the old type. A People's Mission was established at the Temperance Hall in 1890, after Page Hopps's venture had given up use of the building. During 1892, it was taken over by Methodists and made a part of the Bishop Street society. During its heyday in the 1890s and 1900s, the Temperance Hall mission represented a reassertion of old forms. There was temperance work, a mothers' meeting, poor visiting, lodging house services and open-air meetings, but the central event was the Sunday evening service, 'the battle ground of the mission', attended by up to 1,500 people. One of the missionaries, the Rev. H.W. Wade, described it in 1902 as

> a bright, hearty, Methodist service. No attempt is ever made to amuse or tickle the people; it is not what they want; to do it would be to insult them. They want to hear the Gospel of Christ Crucified and its manifold applications to the needs of men.

The Leicester Guardian found nothing distinctive about the service. There were public conversions at the meetings most weeks.[60]

The self-conscious archaism of the Temperance Hall meeting was partly a tactic, derived from the experience of the limitations of more liberal approaches, but also as a reaction to the increasing indifference to religious observance among all classes of society. The posture of non-compromise with the world shared with the contemporary temperance movement, came at a time when the religious were more than ever integrated

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59. WM 4.1907.

60. WM 1.1892; 10.1897; 10.1902; LG 17.2.1900.

into the world of work and respectability through diligence. The elements of methodism which, in mid-century, had cut across the imposition of a rational work ethic were now not in evidence. The symbolic fundamentalism of the Temperance Hall mission gave a sub-cultural identity which can have had little attraction to those indifferent to religion, and marks a further retreat into denominationalism, away from the possibility of the common culture founded on religious observance to which the rhetoric of the mission aspired.[61]

iv. Melbourne Hall and F.B. Meyer

In 1895, the Wesleyan Messenger observed that 'The most successful Nonconformist Church today in Leicester is Melbourne Hall. The secret largely is the breezy earnestness of its consecrated membership'.[62] The hall was built in 1880 and epitomised Meyer's wish to escape churchiness. His longest-serving successor, W.D. Fullerton, noted of its simple but massive appearance

> even the outside of the red-brick building was an advert for up-to-date common sense rather than anything like adherence to ecclesiastical tradition - even of the Free Church.[63]

The Hall had no denominational allegiance. In its early days, its popular orientation was well to the fore, firmly rooted in Meyer's conversion to evangelicalism when he met Moody in York in 1873. Meyer had come to Leicester in 1874 to take up the ministry of the wealthy Victoria Rd Baptist Church. From the first, he seems to have been impatient with

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61, The Mission was disbanded when the Temperance Hall was sold in 1920. Temperance Hall Mission Minutes 5.6.1912; 3.7.1912; 15.6.1914; 2.1.1920; 6.10.1920.

62. LG 10.7.1895.

63. W.Y. Fullerton, At the Sixtieth Milestone (1917) p.52.

the limitations imposed by a formal church organisation, and established the Paradise Place Mission, off Oxford Street. Meyer later wrote that he had

> always desired to raise churches and congregations from those who have revolted, not from Christ but from Christianity, as it is too largely represented to them in ecclesiastical organisations.[64]

According to Fullerton, his actions offended the deacons of Victoria Road, and he was refused permission to hold full services in the mission. Meyer was accused in some quarters of having 'dwindled down to the rank of a city missionary'.[65] In 1878, he resigned his ministry to begin full-time mission work. All the sources on his life are silent about who his sponsors were at this time, but it seems likely that Robert Walker was involved.[66]

During the period 1878-80, Meyer combined Saturday evening lectures in the Presbyterian lecture hall with informal mission work in the town. A church was set up in September 1878 with 78 members to undertake the planning of Melbourne Hall. Meanwhile, Meyer instituted the temperance-based Prison Gate mission.[67]

At Melbourne Hall, Meyer tried to redefine the social role of the church. The building was always open, since he thought it pointless to preach domestic virtues to the working class for whom in many cases home had few comforts. A coffee room was open from 7 to 10 every evening, and there was soon a wide range of sub-organisations, of a devotional

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64. M. Jennie Street, F.B. Meyer. His Life and Work (1902), p.52.

65. W.Y. Fullerton, F.B. Meyer. A Biography (1929), p.51.

66. New schools at Melbourne Hall were named the Robert Walker Memorial Schools.

67. F.B. Meyer, The Bells of Is (1894). Jennie Street, op.cit., p.52. Fullerton, (1929), p.51.

or temperance character for the most part. At one stage, 83 meetings per week were held. Fullerton claimed that Melbourne Hall served as a model for Wesleyan Central Halls in other towns, including Manchester.[68]

Meyer's attitude to sport should not be too readily assumed from his intervention in the Jack Johnson-Bomber Wells fight in 1911, by which time he was a prominent figure in national free church organisations and resident in London.[69] In that instance his motives were to avoid exacerbating racial disharmony, rather than opposition to sport as such. Jennie Street claimed that

> Mr. Meyer especially showed that consecration, in its highest forms, is consistent with interest in manly games and womanly accomplishments, with the culture of the mind and imagination, with the service of the municipality and the state.[70]

It is not apparent how far he already possessed such a view during his time in Leicester, up to 1888. Meyer was a virulent critic of the annual Race meeting, but it was the attendant vices of gambling, drinking and theft which prompted his tirades, rather than the sport.

Meyer's work was always firmly committed to the temperance cause, and he was a leading figure in the Blue Ribbon Army campaign in 1881-2. His handling of Thursday evening temperance meetings at Melbourne Hall showed the calculated informality of his approach to a largely working class audience.[71] In addition, outdoor work included Saturday evening rescue work in pubs and alleys, in which Meyer and his followers escorted

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68. Jennie Street, op.cit., p.118.
69. ibid., pp. 107-108.
70. ibid., p.56.
71. Meyer, op.cit., pp. 108-109.

home drunks and encouraged them to sign the pledge. Meyer seems to have attempted, with some success, to combine the fervour of the Salvationists with the tone of less demagogic missions. His appeal was to reason as well as emotion. As he remarked of open-air work in Humberstone Gate and the Infirmary Square,

> An open-air audience will listen to good, earnest, common sense, and you may season it with that natural play of humour and "bonhomie" which comes and goes whenever the soul is speaking without reserve.[72]

According to Jennie Street, 'The early '80s were years of revival and waves of blessing reached the town of Leicester'. By Fullerton's time (1894-1912), the mood was different, and he chose deliberately not to use mission methods at Melbourne Hall, although there were still three mission halls in the town linked to Melbourne Hall.[73] In part the less dynamic atmosphere may have resulted from the settling down of the Highfields suburb, which was expanding rapidly when Melbourne Hall was built. But as McLeod observes, the waxing and waning of revivalism seems to have been a transatlantic phenomenon without distinctive local causes.[74] The outdoor meetings by the Victoria Park gates, begun in 1888, were kept up, but their very location made them relatively formal. In 1907, numbers were so great as to invite criticism for obstructing the traffic. The orderly crowds were able to sing the words of hymns from a revolving scroll by 1912. As well as acquiescing in the more formal nature of such set pieces, Fullerton allowed the establishment of an even greater number of penumbral organisations, notably a men's meeting in 1909.

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72. Jennie Street, op.cit., p.71. Fullerton (1917), p.102.

73. Melbourne Hall Magazine 6.1909.

74. McLeod, op.cit., pp.284-5.

This followed the pattern of similar meetings elsewhere, going back to Dare's adult classes, in putting sociability before devotion. It was reported in June 1909 that

> The attendance has been phenomenal ... we cannot of course yet speak of accessions to the church from the ranks of the men's meeting, but we can say that numbers of men who have not been in the habit of attending a place of worship have been within our walls during these months, and that there has been a change in the life and conduct of many of them.[75]

Such recreational provisions at Melbourne Hall represent a further separation of social and religious activity, quite alien to Meyer's intentions. It is of some significance that Fullerton's Melbourne Hall Sermons deal almost exclusively with the problems of the individual soul. In On Temptation he seeks to reassert the distinction between prayer meetings and the charitable functions of the hall, insisting that

> Free breakfasts and Robin's Dinners, and Cabmen's Suppers are all good for what they are. Christian people may look after these things, but they are not better Christians because they do them, nor is the world a whit nearer Christ.[76]

Such a rejection of justification by works rather than by faith alone runs counter to the implied ideology of much church activity in the late 19th century, and represents a lessening of commitment to establishing influence over the wider culture. At the same time, Melbourne Hall seems to have drawn further away from its mission hall work.

Thus while Melbourne Hall may have remained one of the most successful of nonconformist churches in the decade before the first world war, its history suggests a withdrawal from the evangelistic fervour which shaped it to a respectable denominationalism, more intent on individual than

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75. W.Y. Fullerton, Melbourne Hall Sermons, 2 vols. (Leicester 1901-3) Iii, pp. 23-4.

76. Melbourne Hall Magazine 12.1911. Paradise Place Mission minutes 21.4.93 passim.

on social salvation. There seems to have been a widening gap between church members and those who attended sub-meetings such as the men's meeting. Its location in the Highfields suburb both facilitated and encouraged such a change, and the suburban desire for exclusiveness of much of its neighbouring population may lie behind the marginalisation of its missionary work in the town.

## C. The Provision of Recreation by Religious Organisations

### i. Rational recreation: the Leicester Domestic Mission[77]

In 1855, the committee of the mission prefaced the report of its missionary, Joseph Dare, with the remark that

> Our great object is not to increase the numbers of our particular flock, but to promote the virtue and happiness of all - to diffuse a spirit of industry and order, of contentment and religion, throughout the community.[78]

At its most optimistic, the Mission served as a form of collective paternalism for a group of employers who lacked the size and stability of operation, and the personal contact with their workforce which underlay factory paternalism elsewhere. Dare's role was initially defined in religious terms, and the committee aimed

> to mitigate those great evils by imparting useful knowledge; giving the counsels of prudence to the improvident; implanting the seeds of penitence and virtue in minds long dark and debased; and carrying the precepts and consolations of religion to those who cannot, or will not, seek them elsewhere.[79]

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77. The minutes of the Leicester Domestic Mission have been widely used as a source for the social history of Leicester, e.g. Jack Simmons, 'A Victorian Social Worker: Joseph Dare and the Leicester Domestic Mission', TLAHS 1970-71. Elliott, op.cit. D. Thompson, op.cit. For Unitarianism in Manchester, see John Seed, 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture in Manchester, 1830-50', Social History, vol. 7, no. 1, January 1982.

78. LDM, 1855.

79. LDM, 1852.

Dare deplored the sectarianism of other missions as heartily as he deplored the enthusiastic lesser popular sects, such as Mormonism, which he observed in his district. The Unitarians had no interest in spreading their own brand of religion, a fact that may have helped Dare to establish contacts with the autodidact artisans who supported his adult classes. Other missions and churches in All Saints' consistently tried to obstruct Dare's work, he claimed.[80]

The rationalistic tenor of Unitarianism and Dare's freedom from the demands of a church-based mission left him great freedom as to how to operate in All Saints' and while domestic visiting was the basic method, he was also able to undertake a range of educational and recreational work which was to provide influential models for others after 1870. Underlying Dare's work was his awareness of the causes of poverty and his ideas as to the means of escape from it. He wavered between locating poverty in the structure of society and attributing it to the deficiencies of popular culture. His powers of observation led him to conclude that 'In the social condition of the poor originate all their sufferings...' [81] and claimed in his first report that 'Whatever the poor are become, the nation, not to say the Government, is responsible for their conditions...'.[82] It is likely, though, that 'responsible' here implies the obligation of charity, rather than blame for having caused the bad conditions in the first place. By the late '50s, Dare commented in passing on the need for regular work, the desirability of factory employment for women, rather than sweating at home, and the bad conditions of the small workshops.[83]

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80. LDM 1848, 1851, 1861.

81. LDM 1855.

82. LDM 1846.

83. LDM 1859, 1861, 1862.

Nevertheless, he was hampered in his critique of the domestic and workshop systems by the dependence of his own committee on outwork. The new growth in the shoe trade was an easier target, since few of the leading Unitarian families made that transition but the argument that poverty was inherent in the economy of the town could not be pushed to its logical conclusion. Instead, Dare turned to more orthodox analysis, blaming sub-classes such as the Irish and itinerants for depressing the moral standing of the whole working class. Dare gave increasing support to the Temperance movement and the Charity Organisation Society, of which he was a founder member of the local branch.[84]

he died in 1876!!

In 1879,? Joseph Dare looked back over more than 30 years at the mission, and stressed the innovative nature of much of the recreational and educational work done there. Among the ventures which he claimed had their origins in the Leicester Domestic Mission were sewing classes for girls, elementary classes for adults, provident clubs, a Band of Hope (soon transferred to the Temperance Hall), penny concerts growing out of the Friday evening music classes, popular lectures, celebrations of Shakespeare's birthday, a window plant show and the annual men's class walk.[85] Several further sub-organisations arose from these efforts. The adult discussion class emerged from the popular lectures, a Naturalists' Field Club from the walks, and the North Leicester Floral and Horticultural Society from the window plant show.[86] Dare also claimed to have initiated counter-attractive social gatherings to coincide with race meetings and fairs.

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84. LDM 1850, 1855, 1864, 1868, 1870.

85. LC 25.1.1879.

86. On flower shows, see below p.115-7.

Such claims to primacy seem to have been well-founded, although Dare is careful to omit references to initiatives, such as the Female Benefit Society, which failed.[87] Of course, there had been cheap entertainments and lectures at the Mechanics' Institute and trade societies had had their provident clubs, but in neither case as part of an over-arching project of social and moral redemption, and certainly not available to the poorest workers, with whom Dare was dealing. Nor had these hitherto been seen as proper aspects of religious work. Dare sought to integrate social and moral improvement in the interest of a rational salvation, as Meyer was to do in a more evangelistic but equally non-sectarian way in the 1870s. If religion and recreation were later to be uneasy partners within churches, at this stage, there was no such contradiction, but that is in part because Dare was not trying to use recreation to win members.

Although it lasted until 1877, the mission in All Saints offered a range of activities typical of rational recreation 20 years earlier, with its stress on lectures, discussion classes, literacy classes, great literature and botanising. Sport, amateur dramatics and concert parties did not need to be confronted. Dare had worries about the way recreational provision was developing though. In 1868 he wrote that

> the Penny Readings, Cheap Concerts, literary and musical entertainments and amusements and games, amongst Life-boat crews and Bands of Hope, were as usual carried on throughout the winter, by the religious bodies of the town. They seem to have lost one of their attraction. As so many of the rising generation are wholly deficient in education and moral training, there is danger lest these kinds of entertainments or games should create a bias for mere sensationalist recreation, and so lead to the disgusting exhibition of the beer-shop or low singing saloon.[88]

87. See below p. 418.

88. LDM 1868.

Dare's work was pioneering and, in institutional terms, successful in its longevity. Several of its sub-organisations were to be models for work throughout the town.

ii. St. Paul's Church and the impact of ritualism

If Dare's work represents a centre of innovation, that of James Mason at St. Paul's represents a consolidation of such ideas, and a model of their application to parochial life. Under Mason, St. Paul's (f.1871) became the principle Anglo-Catholic church in Leicester, and witnessed the application of ritualist emphasis on the sacraments, frequent services and parochial work.[89]

Ritualism appealed to several clergymen who were drawn towards close involvement with working class parishioners. This was certainly the case with F.L. Donaldson at St. Mark's.[90] On the other hand, Leicester's other Anglicans who were successful in this respect included Canon David Vaughan, a broad churchman. It is also apparent, though, that low church opponents of St. Paul's, such as Isaacs at Holy Trinity, had overwhelmingly middle class congregations in fashionable parts of the town, and that other churches with ritualist practices at one time or another, such as St. Andrew's in the 1860s, St. George's in the 1870s and St. Mark's in the 1890s and 1900s, were located in poorer districts. Lancaster suggests that

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89. The main sources for the history of St. Paul's are its parish magazines and J.E. Hextall, Fifty Years of Church, Men and Things at St. Paul's, Leicester 1871-1921 (Leicester 1921).

90. On Donaldson, see Barbara J. Butler, 'Frederic Lewis Donaldson and the Christian Socialist Movement', University of Leeds M.Phil., 1970.

> the arrival of the ritualists in Leicester brought tangible benefits to the working class: not only was life slightly more colourful, the emphasis placed by the new vicars on parish work with its plethora of clubs and parish organisations and the ritualists' willingness to enter even the poorest houses went some way towards relieving urban alienation.[91]

Mason's efforts at St. Paul's form a significant contribution to the regeneration of Anglican parish life, including the establishment of public rituals, of a physical presence of the church in the parish.[92]

The new church was built adjacent to the salubrious Fosse Road on the very edge of the Western development of the town. It benefitted from the support of wealthy neighbours and could rely on a respectable congregation. Nevertheless, its parish included by 1886 'a vast majority of the working class', inhabiting the housing built on the Danett's Hall estate, some of which, despite its development by the Freehold Land Society, was of poor quality.[93] Much of the housing, though was relatively good, and the West End was for the most part an area for the most prosperous sections of the working class. Indeed, in 1894, at a time when small terraced villa development along the Narborough Road was only beginning, the deacons of nonconformist Emanuel Church claimed that the neighbourhood comprised 'a large population of mixed middle class order with a large sprinkling of working people'.[94] This was not a wholly disinterested description as it was made in a letter to a prospective minister, but it adds weight to the impression that this was not one of the poorer districts of the town. It contrasts with Donaldson's parish in the Belgrave

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91. Lancaster, op.cit., ch. 5.

92. Cf. Obelkevich, op.cit., p.103, and D. Thompson, op.cit., on the revival of parish life as a response to 'spiritual destitution'.

93. St. Paul's Magazine 8.1886. Elliott, op.cit., pp.115-116.

94. Emanuel Church minutes 2.5.1894.

Gate-Wharf Street area, resembling rather the milieu of Melbourne Hall in Highfields or the Wesleyan Hall in North Evington.

Mason's activities met with considerable success. Reviewing his career in 1911, the parish magazine recalled that at the outset

> there quickly gathered a large congregation which has maintained itself up to now, for although there are loud complaints in many of the Leicester parishes that during the past years the attendences in the Divine service have fallen off, there may be seen at St. Paul's on Sunday mornings a well filled church.[95]

By this time, morning attendance was becoming rare among the working class, but St. Paul's may have been an exception.

Mason himself had a fine sporting past and was truly an embodiment of muscular Christianity. He was 'victor ludorum' in the Cambridge University Athletic Sports during his time at St. Catherine's.[96] There is no sign though that he encouraged organised games in his early years at St. Paul's, nor that he had a close involvement with the sports clubs established there later. The initial impetus was in activities linked to the Sunday Schools, more attractive services and the start of devotional guilds. Inglis has noted the fear within the Church of England c.1880 that congregational forms were displacing the parochial nature of church work.[97] The same point was made by Isaacs in his report to the Episcopal Visitation of 1872, when he objected to 'The operation of church guilds by which attempts are made to alienate members of other congregations'.[98] This was an implied criticism of St. Paul's, but, like the anti-confessional

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95. St. Paul's Magazine 10.1911.

96. Hextall, p.10.

97. Inglis, op.cit., pp.25-6.

98. Episcopal Visitation Records 1872, Leicester, Christ Church.

demonstrations of 1873 and 1874, made little headway with Bishop Magee. The guilds developed a social aspect, with annual excursions, comparable to Sunday School teachers' outings. By 1887, there were Guilds' teas, with entertainments, including farces, monologues and dancing, and in 1909, the Guilds of St. Crispin and the Holy Ghost were responsible for the revival of Saturday night dances.[99] But the Guilds remained organisations principally dedicated to bible study, prayer and personal devotion, comparable to class meetings rather than social clubs. Similarly, the aim of restoring 'the beauty of holiness' explains much of the rest of the cultural aspects of church life in the first years. Thus the Rifle Corps and band attended the service in July 1874, and in September the festival of the Peterborough Diocesan Choral Association was held in the church. The latter attracted such a crowd that King Richard's Road was 'crowded like a fair' and many were turned away. The 1875 harvest festival similarly saw the church crowded an hour before the start of the service.[100] Gradually, however, the range of activities broadened. In 1875, there was the first Christmas tea party, held in the Holy Bones before the new schoolrooms were built in 1878. The building of the latter necessitated the first St. Paul's bazaar in 1877. The branch of the Church of England Temperance Society (f1882) hardly represents a novel departure, but the CofE Working Men's Association branch was the first general social organisation associated with the church, offering tea, music and dancing. Other wholly recreational

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99. St. Paul's Magazine 2.1887; 2.1888; 4.1909.

100. St. Paul's Magazine 8.1874; 10.1874; 10.1875.

organisations followed; a drum and fife band in 1881, more varied entertainments by parishioners at the Christmas tea party in 1886, dancing classes in 1895, the St. Paul's minstrels in 1896, whist matches in 1898 and a cycling club in 1910.[101] Football had been started in 1892 when the St. Paul's (Victor) FC was established. A second team was formed in 1894 when they joined the Leicester FA.[102] Cricket had a longer history. The original St. Paul's club had been in existence for some years in 1893 when a second club, the St. Paul's Victors was formed to cater for 'somewhat younger members'. They played in the Bedehouse Meadows. It was not until 1893 that their results began to be published in the parish magazine, but by November 1894 a whole page was given over to averages. Concern that sport was not sufficiently subservient to religion was not expressed in print until 1912, when it was made a condition of membership of the junior cricket team that members attend Sunday morning service.[103] The cricket club itself began to develop subsidiary activities, with an annual dinner at the Dane's Hill Tavern, concerts and dancing classes.

None of this was unique to St. Paul's. Their 1893 fixture list shows that by then several churches and chapels had cricket teams. There was no claim that St. Paul's was first in the field, although Guilds were an innovation. What is characteristic of St. Paul's, and perhaps the product of ritualist sympathy for the poor, is the relative freedom of the church's pronouncements from censoriousness.

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101. St. Paul's Magazine 4.1882; 4.1880; 1.1881; 1.1887; 2.1895; 2.1896; 12.1898; 1.1910. The first whist match was against a team from the co-operative Anchor Boot and Shoe Works. The co-operators lost 20-10.

102. St. Paul's Magazine 4.1893; 5.1894; 6.1894.

103. The cricket club was first mentioned in the magazine for February, 1888. See also St. Paul's Magazine 3.1893; 5.1893; 10.1893; 11.1894; 12.1892; 7.1889; 8.1901; 10.1912.

Mason was keen that sport should not have priority over devotion, but there is a great difference between the attitudes of Wesleyans, for example, to dancing, acting and popular music and that of St. Paul's. Banjo songs were performed at a St. Paul's cricket club entertainment in 1889 without public criticism; it is difficult to imagine the same at Bishop Street. The more varied entertainments at the 1886 Christmas festivities included a Punch and Judy show of which it was remarked that 'we were very glad to find that our minds have not yet become so expanded as to be superior to the appreciation of this delightful drama'.[104]

In so far as ritualists did have a special attraction for a wider audience, then, apart from any features of the services, it was in a less severe attitude to popular culture and its changing fashions rather than in institutional innovations. St. Paul's offers a very different model for the involvement of the church with society from either the Leicester Domestic Mission or Melbourne Hall, but Mason was able all the same to establish its influence throughout the West End of Leicester. Indeed, Edward Seeley of the Church of the Martyrs, a low church establishment built for an adjoining area by the Harris family of Westcotes, remarked sourly on the poor interest in church business and the lack of attendance at the Parochial Church Council there in 1905 that 'Some say it is not needed in this Parish as the vicar is not a ritualist'.[105] By contrast, Mason's funeral procession in 1912 was followed and watched by truly massive crowds, a testimony, one suspects, to his almost patriarchal role in the area rather than a tribute to his theology per se.

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104. St. Paul's Magazine 1.1887.

105. Episcopal Visitation Returns 1905. Leicester, The Martyrs.

iii. Men's Associations

It is a commonplace of later 19th century religious history that attendance was more common amongst women than amongst men. The need to reach adult males was great if churches were to make a significant impact on working class culture. Moreover, the fact that many men in Leicester worked outside factories with their attendant socialising influence gave priority to involving them in church institutions. From the Leicester Domestic Mission's discussion classes onwards, men's associations were to the fore, and were a source later of other penumbral organisations. David Thompson traces their origins to adult education, citing the Society of Friends Adult School (1861), the Sanvey Gate Adult School and the Dover Street classes (both 1868). Most such classes were initially linked to relief, and their educational functions, like their religious ones, could become attenuated. Like Vaughan's Working Men's College (f1862) which took another road away from its foundation as a branch of St. Martin's, to more formal education work, the motivation behind such schools and classes was strictly within the tradition of providing counter-attractions to less respectable pastimes. They were vice-presidential in organisation, and while some became established as centres of popular commitment to mutual self-improvement, others encountered the lack of interest all too readily induced by such philanthropic gestures.

One such venture was St. Peter's Club, founded in October 1878 in the parish school rooms in Gopsall Street, in the North-western part of Highfields. It was supported by the traders and professionals living in the streets off the adjacent stretch of the London Road. The aims of the club were 'to promote social intercourse moral and mental

improvement ... and rational enjoyment'.[106] The club cost 1/- to join and 1/- subscription per quarter, well within the scope of better-off working men. The programme consisted of Tuesday evening lectures on temperance, scientific and literary subjects by lesser local worthies, a well-tried formula used in the early days of the Leicester Domestic Mission, and now rather archaic. In addition, there was an informal aspect to the club, and the rooms were open 7pm-10pm (Saturdays 2-10) for members, with a library and coffee. The intention was that 'more of the working men of the Parish would use the Reading room and Smoke room of the Club instead of going to the public house'.[107]

The proposal to broaden activities by creating cricket and athletic clubs was turned down, since parishioners belonged to many other clubs in the town.[108] This is interesting in view of the large number of church cricket and football teams in the 1890s, and may suggest that churches were most important in this respect in new suburbs, such as the West End or Belgrave, or in impoverished inner urban areas such as St. George's. Even so, St. Peter's had at least established a cricket team by 1901. The church clubs may have made it easier for people to join sports clubs who had been excluded on social or financial grounds from those founded in the previous generation.

The club was not the success which its promoters had looked for. There was little working class interest in its running, and although there were 90 on the books after six months, it was reported that

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106. St. Peter's Magazine 11.1880.

107. St. Peter's Magazine 2.1879.

> your committee feel that these "club nights" [ie Tuesday evenings] ought greatly to promote social intercourse, and have tried hard to make the programmes combine instruction with amusement. They regret that the attendance has at times been poor, and earnestly invite members to come forward and help in making the club nights as attractive as possible.

There is little evidence that they did so, and by March 1880, attendance at meetings had dwindled to as few as 13. Perhaps due to the flagging interest of sponsors, the club fell into debt and was forced to hold a bazaar in 1880 to pay the money off. There are indications of greater success subsequently, and in particular, the Sparkenhoe Floral and Horticultural Society was formed in 1881, with its shows at the school.[109] While floriculture was favoured by all rational recreationists, it seems that the St. Peter's Club never achieved its aim of becoming an all-embracing cultural institution for the parish. The strength of other attractions in this part of the town, within reach of Victoria Park and the pubs along the London Road, was too powerful. Elsewhere, similar parochial or neighbourhood activities were more successful. The Leicester Catholic Club, in Wellington Street (1887), enjoyed the special advantages of all Catholic institutions in attracting a working class clientele. Established 'to provide social recreation for Catholic men, their non-Catholic friends and for the husbands of Catholic wives' it became the centre of Catholic sociability in the town.[110] The subscription of 10/- per annum gave access to the club from 7 to 11 pm most days, and facilities for billiards, shooting, smoking concerts, library and reading room.

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109. St. Peter's Magazine 3.1879; 3.1880; 4.1880; 8.1882; 4.1881.

110. The Rosary and St. Peter's Magazine 12.1911.

Its provision of alcoholic refreshments distinguished it from all other religious institutions in the town. The Catholic Club had to some extent a captive audience, although there were plenty of pubs catering for Irish areas of the town.

Suburban growth, often with very limited facilities for drinking due to the restrictive policies of the licensing bench, gave advantages to enterprising religious organisations in the new areas. This may in part explain the success of St. Paul's and Melbourne Hall, as of the West End Men's Own Association at the Robert Hall Memorial Baptist Church, f.1908. The approach of the church was far less patronising than that of St. Peter's 30 years previously, and had by November 1908 attracted an average attendance for Tuesday evening meetings of 220. The form was to be an hour-long, non-political, non-denominational meeting in which

> we shall listen to music rendered by accomplished artistes, and helpful words from men of experience and insight. We are not to have sermons ... Our speakers will have to be bright, sensible and to the point ...[111]

Many churches tried to attract adult men into their buildings by similar means from the 1880s on, notably in nonconformist circles by the establishment of Pleasant Sunday Afternoon classes. By the 1900s, PSAs were losing their appeal, in part no doubt due to the decline of Sabbatarian influences in the council in the 1890s and the consequent opening of municipal facilities.[112] For town centre churches such as Archdeacon Lane and

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111. Robert Hall Magazine 10.1908.

112. On Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, see Inglis, op.cit.

Friar Lane, the demands of their position as mission churches meant that their men's associations increasingly took on the function of rescue organisations and shelters, rather than centres of sociability for would-be self improvers. The Archdeacon Lane Men's Institute was opened in 1908, two years after the PSA was wound up, and attracted about 60 men two night a week. In 1909, it was reported that

> A forward step has been taken in arranging musical evenings and having stirring addresses from those well-qualified to impress the class of men who need them. A. Kemp [of, Police Court fame], Goodman and others who by awful experience can speak of the evils of drink and selfish living and testify to the difference Christ can make in the life have been secured for this purpose.[113]

The Institute provided 'recreation and amusements ... for many who otherwise would be walking the streets or indulging in questionable amusements'. Although it maintained its attendance, the Institute was not expanded, as the minister had hoped, into a six nights a week meeting place. Only £60 of the £400 needed was forthcoming. There was a limit to how willing an increasingly suburban congregation was to invest in missionary activity in the town centre.[114] There may also have been an awareness that there were sufficient men's institutes in the town by this time. The Bond Street Year book of 1909 reported that there were many similar to their own Brotherhood.[115]

The Bond Street Brotherhood had 280 on its books in that year, and attracted 215 to Sunday afternoon meetings. It was not identical

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113. Archdeacon Lane Church minutes 8.10.1906; 8.4.1908; 20.1.1909.
114. Archdeacon Lane Church minutes 19.1.1910; 1.2.1911.
115. Bond St Year book 1909.

to the Institute at Archdeacon Lane, as although it had an institute for rescue work, it also promoted activities among the congregation, and for a wider public. There were Saturday afternoon rambles, open air concerts, a sick club, physical culture class and whist, skittle and bagatelle matches.[116] In many ways, such institutes were successors to the PSAs, and became the focus of work among the adult male population of central Leicester after 1900. They fulfilled much the same role as did East London settlements.[117] Whereas the church mutual improvement societies and literary guilds had served, like that at Bond Street, to 'do much towards removing our apparent coldness and want of sociability ...' that is, to encourage closer contact within the membership of the church, the institutions had a missionary role. A Bond Street spokesman was proud to boast that

> We have in the Brotherhood men who a year or two ago would not have thought of entering a Church, who by being brought into our meetings are taking an interest in the life and works of the Church generally.[118]

There were few such initiatives for working women, although mothers' meetings and sewing circles were ubiquitous. Greater attendance rates among women may have led to complacency on the part of the churches. The Temperance Hall mission seems to have been unique in providing a

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116. Bond St Yearbook 1909, 1910, 1914.

117. On Oxford House in Bethnall Green, see Inglis op.cit., and McLeod 1974 pp.115-16. McLeod notes concerning the decline of Oxford House, 'It was killed not by opposition within the churches, but by commercial capitalism: in the age of the wireless, the cinema and the dog track the clubs for boys continued to flourish, but those for men were no longer needed by their former supporters'. This is suggestive of the course which the recreational activities of Leicester's inner urban churches were to take in the interwar period.

118. Bond St Yearbook 1909.

weekly social evening for young women, 'whose life is spent to entirely in the monotony of the work of the factory'. Their Wednesday meetings included games and ball drill, as well as practical lectures on Cooking, Millinery, Nursing and singing. The aim was to integrate young women more effectively into a domestic role.[119]

iv. Youth, the churches and recreation

One response of churches to their failure to establish their hold over growing urban populations was, as Yeo has observed, to identify a number of age-, sex-, and class-specific target groups. That this was done along lines drawn up elsewhere, but which religious organisations did much to confirm, is hardly surprising. At a time when economic and educational changes were hardening definitions of childhood and adolescence, there was little the churches could do in their desire to involve themselves with popular culture than to accept such definitions. Nor were they alone in doing this.

The 'problem of youth' directly confronted the churches. Sunday schools had long been their most successful organisations in numerical terms, but it was equally well-established that the numbers who passed from Sunday school to church membership were few. If confirmation was a 'rite de passage' at all, it marked the end of enforced attendance at any religious institution. As the Rev. George Kilby commented at the 250th anniversary service of Friar Lane in 1906, at which new recreational facilities were opened in the form of a memorial hall,

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119. WM 10.1902.

> We open our doors wider to admit the babes; we want to close the flood-gates at the other end, which open to this great human tide and the influences of questionable amusements and undesirable companionship.[120]

Most of the recreational provision for youth thus arose from a search for means of keeping Sunday school pupils in contact with church organisations. A secondary concern was to do specifically with the discipline of the older male scholars, the so-called 'Big Boy Problem'. Sport provided a potential solution to both needs.

Young people seem first to have been the subjects of the institutional attentions of churches in Leicester c.1880. At first, efforts were channelled along largely devotional lines. Christ Church had set up a bible class for young men by 1882, which was claimed to be successful in keeping in touch with ex-Sunday scholars. The following year, Parsons started Sunday evening sermons for young men at Emanuel Church, diversifying in 1884 with the formation of a literary and musical society for the young men and women of the church, school and neighbourhood. King Richard's Rd Methodist Church could claim by 1898 that 'we have now practically solved the question "How to retain our elder scholars"'. An Adult Bible Class was set up in 1896 which combined 'democratic organisation' and 'warm feelings in class' with a Benefit Club, String Band, social evenings and Saturday afternoon outings in the summer.[121]

Evidence of the activities of other initiatives elsewhere suggests that it was the social activities, rather than the classes, which lay behind any such success. From the later 1880s, there are numerous cases

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120. Friar Lane 250th Anniversary, Leicester 1906.

121. Episcopal Visitation Records 1882. Leicester, Christ Church. Emanuel Church minutes 28.11.83; 19.9.84. WM 11.98.

of Sunday schools forming football and cricket clubs, establishing on a weekly basis the opportunities for sociability presented less frequently by the more traditional anniversaries and outings. The Bond St Boys' Recreation Club was thus formed in 1898 'to afford the Sunday school teachers the opportunity of coming into closer touch with the everyday life of their scholars'.[122]

One of the clearest expositions of the desirability of involvement with sport was given by W.H. Wagstaff to a united teachers' meeting in 1908. He doubted if a quarter of the 700 boys in each Sunday School year would be in church in five years' time, and regretted that

> It is a melancholy sight in all our large towns to see the aimless drifting of young people, who parade the streets, night after night, to all appearances dead to the call of "higher things".

The need was to make the Sunday school 'the vestibule of true manhood instead of the vestibule of the public house', and sport was the means to do so, since it taught self-mastery and provided an opportunity for fellowship with pupils. Moreover, it provided a way into their everyday thoughts since 'You may be interested in David, or Jonah, or Daniel; but it is more than probable that they are interested in the doings of Ranjitsinghi or C.B. Fry'.[123]

There were sermons and addresses on sporting topics. Bond St Sunday School Mutual Improvement Society debated in 1900 'The influence of Present Day Football', and St. Martin's had annual football services, at which the town's leading sportsmen were among the congregation. In 1894, St.

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122. Bond St Yearbook 1898.

123. Melbourne Hall Magazine 1.1908.

Paul's tried to bridge the gap between sporting activities and religious devotion with 'a short service addressed for youth and young men designed in the first instance for those connected with our cricket, football and the athletic clubs'. The motto of the Archdeacon Lane Young Men's Club for 1903 was 'Quit ye like men, be strong', and its president drew parallels between spiritual and physical strength in a manner which would not have been out of place in certain Anglican circles in the 1860s.[124]

At the same time as sport was establishing this pre-eminence, churches were establishing sub-organisations for young men which were neither attached to Sunday schools nor of a largely devotional nature. From earlier literary societies there developed institutions such as the Bond St Young Men's Guild (1887) and the Bishop St Young People's League (1893) which from the first made sociability, albeit on church premises, the centre of their activities.[125]

Such societies, like the devotional guilds at St. Paul's, tended towards an exclusivity, at worst cliquishness, which meant that their missionary potential was limited. Moreover, one suspects that such organisations were most regularly supported by lower middle class and respectable working class elements who were already most likely to support the churches. Large numbers of working class youth remained unaffected by them. One such group were the newspaper boys and others from the street for whom Arthur Donnisthorpe, partner in a spinning firm, opened the Vauxhall St Evening home in 1890, as outwork for Bond St Chapel.

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124. Bond St Yearbook 1900. LG 28.4.1900. St. Paul's Magazine 10.1894. Archdeacon Lane Young Men's Club Yearbook 1903.

125. Bond St Yearbook 1888. WM 4.1894.

Open two nights a week, once for boys under 13, it attracted an average attendance of 70 for singing, games and cocoa and biscuits. The unruly nature of such an assembly made mission work initially difficult, but Donnisthorpe was able to report soon after that

> A marked improvement is already visible in those boys who have visited "the Home" from its commencement; then it was a thing impossible to either sing a hymn or the blessing which now regularly and happily precedes the refreshments ...

It was hoped to introduce a Sunday evening service when order was more firmly established.[126]

If sport offered an attractive setting for relations between youths and their would-be mentors, military discipline offered another, but one about which many, particularly nonconformists, had their doubts. The churches were to the fore in the establishment of all the paramilitary youth movements established in Leicester in the first decade of the 20th century. Members of St. Paul's church were enthusiastic about the Church Lads' Brigade, the Leicester battalion of which was established in 1900. It was felt to satisfy a 'crying need' for an organisation for 13-18 year olds, and it was claimed that

> The "military" organisation of the Church Lads' Brigade tends greatly to foster discipline and respect for authority, besides tending to kindle "esprit de corps" and a healthy enthusiasm, and enlisting these qualities on behalf of the church.

Soon, the St. Paul's Church Lads' Brigade was prominent in all parochial entertainments and at services, and took part in town-wide activities such as an excursion to Blackpool in 1902. In 1909, the church formed

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126. Bond St Yearbook 1890. On Donisthorpe, see Shirley Ellis, op.cit.

a scout troop as well.[127] By contrast, the foundation in 1901 of the Bishop St Company (Leicester 5th) of the Boy's Brigade needed special pleading that it would not foster a military spirit, and the Melbourne Hall company (Leicester 8th) was only formed in 1909 'after considerable thought' and with the pledge that 'We hope to graft some of the best features of the Boy Scouts movement onto our brigade, and after a while to study ambulance work too'. Church members were assured that very few boys went on to become soldiers.[128]

The tendency of recruitment and missionary effort in voluntary organisations to shift from adults to children as the organisations became established and respectable, accepted in the wider society as they relinquished their claims to hegemony, has been observed by Harrison with reference to the Temperance movement and the Band of Hope. The same tendency among churches should not be exaggerated before 1914. Churches offered particular attractions to youths who could not get what they offered elsewhere, particularly sport and youth movements, and such activities were considerably subsidised. It seems unlikely, though, that more than a very few boys were drawn any more closely into church life proper through their involvement in guilds, sports teams or brigades than they had been at Sunday school. The churches were providing important social facilities, both in poor districts and in the new suburbs, but theirs was not a strictly religious role. At best, though, churches could provide an all-embracing series of recreations and a corresponding sense of community. J. and G. Newberry recall of their youth at Archdeacon Lane that 'It was a very active Church

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127. St. Paul's Magazine 5.1900; 6.1901; 8.1901; 9.1902; 5.1909.

128. WM 1.1902. Melbourne Hall Magazine 12.1909; 7.1910.

and most of our time was spent there'. The week's events included Young Men's and Ladies' Classes, a Christian Endeavour meeting, guild, a sewing meeting and tea, Band of Hope meeting, physical culture class, Saturday evening temperance meeting and social, and services on Sunday evening, Wednesday evening and at the Saturday evening temperance meeting, as well as cycling or rambling when weather permitted.[129] It seems likely that such immersion in church life, the early 20th century equivalent of the circumscribed social life of mid-19th century nonconformists, was confined to a relatively small section of the population, as was churchgoing itself.

v. Bazaars

Bazaars have had a bad press ever since their rise to public notice in the 1870s. For Yeo, they represent the most obvious compromise with the commercial world, and are archetypal examples of the tendency of auxiliary activities to eclipse organisations' original purpose. The financial demands of bricks and mortar were great, whether in saving up for extensions or in paying off accumulated debts. Bazaars were the most successful means of tapping the wealth of supporters and of the town as a whole, at a time when private patronage and congregational resources were clearly not equal to the demands of churches in a rapidly expanding town.

The rise of the bazaar is evinced in a comment in the Leicester Chronicle's report of a London Rd Chapel Bazaar in the Temperance Hall

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129. LRO NB/179/164 MS Memoirs n.d. It is possible that these refer to the period after 1918.

in 1877, that 'Bazaars have become quite a fashion of the times. Now-a-days scarcely any benevolent, charitable, or Christian work is promoted without their aid ...'.[130] Emanuel Church held its first bazaar in 1876, to reduce the chapel debt, while St. Paul's held their first one the following year, to pay for new schoolrooms.[131] The novelty of the bazaar soon wore off, for both organisers and the public. The St. Peter's Club resorted to one in 1880, a spokesman adding that 'Although a few of us like the trouble of preparing for a bazaar, it is yet found a comparatively easy way of raising funds'.[132] In 1891, it was regretted at St. Paul's that 'we could wish ... that the enthusiasm of the neighbourhood were a little more in evidence'.[133] By the early 20th century, calls for new efforts for bazaars were more frequently accompanied by apologia, such as that of Bishop Street in 1904 when it was noted that

> Bazaars have sometimes been spoken of as "necessary evils", as "regrettable necessities". But this does not apply to our sale of June 9th, 10th and 11th. Ours would be more fittingly referred to as a means of grace. Unanimity and good feeling prevailed from first to last.[134]

Not every church made such claims for the theological attributes of the bazaar, but few chose to reject them since, however time-consuming, hackneyed and tawdry they could be, they rarely failed to reach their financial targets. The Robert Hall Memorial Church was rare in that, having first adopted this means of fund-raising it chose in 1906 to reject it, on the grounds that

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130. LC 12.5.1877.

131. Emanuel Church minutes 10.1.1876. St. Paul's Magazine 12.1877.

132. St. Peter's Magazine 4.1880.

133. St. Paul's Magazine 4.1891.

134. WM 4.1904.

> we have decided to "put away childish things", and second best methods of raising money such as bazaars, and to wipe out any deficiency that may occur by bringing free-will offerings at the end of the year.

That this was expecting a lot of the generosity of the congregation may be implied from a further appeal later in the year to 'lay by some of the money of which God has made you steward, so that we may be delivered from the confusion of a bazaar'.[135]

Behind the continued use of bazaars was their ability to raise funds. In 1891, St. Paul's raised £621 net in four days; by 1900, this figure would have been small, and £1,000 was commonly expected and £1,500 was not unknown. As time went on, bazaars were no longer left wholly to the efforts of ladies of the congregation, for many of whom they must have represented a major leisure pursuit, with organisation and production of goods for sale, such as embroidery or sewing. By the early 20th century, bazaars were based on themes such as 'The Sunny South' or 'Canada in Winter', and professional set designers and erectors were hired from outside town to decorate halls. The Floral Hall, before its demise in 1900, came to specialise in bazaars, which were always more successful than its industrial exhibitions, and its only rival was the much smaller Temperance Hall.

A well-documented example, showing the complexity of organising and running a bazaar, as well as the attractions they had to offer, was St. Andrew's Ice Carnival at the Floral Hall in November 1890.[136] Inspired by the Royal Albert Hall's Ice Carnival of the previous year, the bazaar

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135. WM 3.1907; 11.1907.

136. The following is based on the collection of accounts, newspaper cuttings etc in LRO 5D 73/32.

aimed to raise funds to buy school buildings, the rent of which was a heavy drain on resources. The vicar told those assembled at the opening ceremony that

> If they could have raised the money in any other way, they would have done so, but with all his begging he could not beg enough big cheques and donations and had found it necessary to try the inevitable bazaar.

Despite this apparent lack of enthusiasm, the Ice carnival was a major spectacle, open every day but Sunday, Monday to Monday from 2.30 to 10.30. The organisation fell to a committee consisting of the vicar (S. Godber), three assistant clergy, the two churchwardens, and over 50 other men, presumably all parishioners, although the treasurer, Thomas Jones, was an inhabitant of Stoneygate. The congregation, the vicar claimed, were very enthusiastic. The basic design work was contracted out to Alfred Mitchell, of William Whiteley of Westbourne Grove, who had done the same for the Albert Hall carnival. The stalls were under the supervision of the ladies. As well as the usual features of bazaars, such as sales of work (here from 'international stalls' decorated with motifs representing cold countries), a livestock stall, gipsy tent, fishpond, doll exhibition, shooting gallery, photographic stall, refreshments (non-alcoholic) and oyster bar, there was a tent once used by the Shah of Persia, and a snow track (in reality sawdust, as there was no real ice at the carnival) for snow shoe races. Some indication of how materials were obtained from some of the stalls can be gleaned from a letter sent by the Unique Manufacturing Co. of Rotherham 'proprietors of several quick-selling specialities', who offered 40% discount on their goods, obtainable on a sale or return basis. They supplied bazaars throughout the country,

'by this means furthering the good cause for which the Bazaar is being held, and at the same time ... advertising our goods and creating a demand for them'.

There were numerous musical and dramatic entertainments, with a number of bands including an 8-piece string band, the Corporation Gas Band and the police band, all hired by the number of performances to be given. There were to be ballad concerts, organ and piano recitals, the 'Dusky diamonds' minstrels, tableaux, waxworks, and a conjurer. It appears that the amateur theatricals were unsuccessful, most companies refusing to appear due to the lack of changing facilities and the small size of the stage provided for them.

The carnival could boast an impressive list of patrons from county society, as may be expected for a Church of England fund-raising venture. Most did not attend, although the Marquis and Marchioness of Granby opened the bazaar. The urban bourgeoisie, on the other hand, was well represented by people such as T.F. Johnson, T. Wright and J.A. Corah. Admission was 1/- from 2.30-6, 6d from 6-10, except for the last two days when, with most of the goods gone, it was 6d all day. The prestigious opening ceremony cost 2/- to attend. Season tickets, at 2/6 accounted for £222-6-3 of the receipts (ie 1770 tickets, plus 2/3), while £212-1-3 was taken on the door. The total receipts of £2,153 were thus largely made up from sales and side-shows, and ensured that the £1,500 target for profits was easily reached.

The appeal of such bazaars seems to have been a wide one, although the lack of alcoholic drinks and the polite nature of the entertainments suggests a respectable audience. Bazaars combined aspects of the fairground with those of the respectable music hall, and both were purged of their

least rational aspects. They had little that was spiritual about them, the opening speeches and sales of photos of church and clergy representing virtually the only direct links with the parent organisation. Imperial, rather than religious themes came to dominate, and the use of professional designers precluded any local themes. Bazaar sets had to be such as to appeal to audiences all over the country, and empire fitted the bill. For all their shoddiness, bazaars seem to have been genuinely popular, and at times a vigorous type of entertainment. The church-hall associations of more recent examples should not detract from the appeal of the big set-pieces, which seem to have sought to reproduce some of the spectacle of contemporary pantomime. Moreover, bazaars were major events in the lives of congregations, and an important aspect of the leisure of female members of churches.

## D. Religious Organisations and Attitudes to Recreation

### i. The decline of earnestness

The effects of nonconformist attitudes to recreation are referred to elsewhere in this study to explain characteristics of Leicester's cultural life, notably theatre, music hall and the pub. Examples are easily found of puritanical control of congregation members, and of efforts to affect public policy in matters of recreation and behaviour. The Friar Lane church minutes make several references to cases such as those of Everard King, 'excluded for intoxication' and Ann Chapman 'excluded for fornication', both in 1851, and in 1856 it was resolved that

> in future if any member of the church fail in business his case shall be examined by the Officers of the church ... whose report shall determine the brethren what course to take with each individual.[137]

The church in this case laid claim to control over the morality of business life as well as sexual morality and drinking habits. Such instances of close personal supervision were soon to be outmoded. There are no such examples in the Friar Lane minute book after 1864, and just as the class meeting lost its vitality, so was the formal discipline of the church relaxed. Personal inquisition made way for more strident denunciation of public morals, drunkenness, sabbath-breaking and gambling. The greater respectability of later 19th century nonconformity demanded that, whether or not members were less inclined to sin, their churches were less eager to publicise the fact of their doing so.

Changing attitudes to standards of behaviour had great importance for recreation. As R.W. Dale recalled in 1895, in the 1820s, many recreations had been avoided 'on the principle that it was desirable to surround the moral life with a certain environment favourable to the development of the graver and more serious virtues'.[138] As a result of social success, many nonconformists rejected the puritanism of the earlier period, while at the same time, Anglican notions of religious obligation were being eroded. McLeod dates this shift in London to the period 1875-85 when 'middle and upper-class people were becoming increasingly ready to take pleasure as their first consideration, even when it conflicted with what had been taught to regard as duty'.[139]

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137. Friar Lane Minutes 14.7.1851; 27.10.1856.

138. British Weekly 23.3.1895, quoted in Inglis op.cit., p.74.

139. McLeod 1974 p.238. See also Gilbert op.cit., ch. 8.

Self-development became a popular notion, and earnestness was less fashionable. The churches' willingness from the 1870s on to encourage sociability did nothing to arrest the trend. While the campaigns against drink, Meyer's condemnation of the Races, and the denunciation of popular reading matter continued apace, church socials and temperance tea meetings helped congregations to escape from the intense church life of the past.[140] Gambling became a more common target as the century wore on. In November 1889, Leicester Sunday School Union delegates formed a sub-committee to issue pledges for scholars to renounce gambling, while the Ruridiaconal chapter resolved that there should be services against it throughout the town. Hugh Price Hughes made 'the sin of gambling' central to his mission address at the Floral Hall in the same year, which was received 'with long continuous cheers, the audience waiving their hats and handkerchiefs in support of it'.[141]

It was easier to condemn the grosser abuses of others than critically to assess the development of one's own church. Re-assessments of the role of recreation in religious life were more frequent from the 1890s. Sometimes, modern developments could be approved, if in a qualified manner. It was thought at the Robert Hall Memorial Baptist Church that holidays should be admitted as a desirable part of life, but only in so far as such recreation was used 'for getting away from the dreary round and

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140. On reading, Bond St Yearbook 1878 reports that 'The teachers of our Sunday School are anxious to promote the sale of periodicals of a moral and religious character. They feel the importance in this reading age of circulating pure and wholesome literature, to counteract so much that is sold that is of a vicious character'.

141. Leicester Sunday School Union Journal, December 1889; St. Paul's Magazine 10.1890; WM 1.1890.

the common task to the high hills of God where we may drink in the fresh influence that God has given without stint ...'.[142] But the idea that wholesome recreations would chase out bad, rather than stimulate a taste for them, was not universally accepted. There was concern among Wesleyans as late as 1914 that acting talents, manifested at a Christmas entertainment, should be carefully restricted to the service of God. There was always a fear that recreational activities would cease to be improving, and efforts were made to counter the trend. At St. Leonard's in 1898, the incumbent noted that 'For some time it has been felt that the Institute fell short of its ideal in that it supplied nothing of an improving character ...'[143] Readings from Shakespeare were to be introduced to set this right.

In the early 20th century, religious speakers began to turn from decrying sins of commission to criticism of what was categorised as the materialism of contemporary society. The Bishop of Peterborough had earlier been 'sadly conscious of the overwhelming importance attached to material things and the want of culture in a place like Leicester ...'.[144] The term 'materialism' does not seem to have been used before c.1910, when Fullerton, reviewing some statistics of the decline of free church attendance in Liverpool since 1881 saw 'the growth of materialism and the emphasis on the life that now is instead of the life that is eternal' as a major factor in explaining the lack of observance.[145] In advocating

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142. Robert Hall Magazine 7.1908. WM 10.1901.

143. St. Leonard's Magazine 1.1908.

144. Louise Creighton, Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton (1906).

145. Melbourne Hall Magazine 1.1910.

a new renunciation of worldly concerns and a resubmission to the moral discipline of the church, Fullerton was asking for a reversal of the tendency of nonconformity over the previous 50 years. The language of 'materialism', like that of 'apathy', was one of despair, blaming the people for trends of increasing consumption and more leisure in which the church, and especially its leading members, had shared, and which it had done little to denounce for several decades. By 1910, the churches' impact on popular culture was much reduced, yet in respect of temperance and sabbatarianism, its former strength left a lasting mark.

ii. Religious organisations and drink

It is often difficult to isolate the social impact of religion per se from that of its adherents. The wealthy citizens who sat on the bench had many motives for acting to restrict the drink trade. E.S. Ellis, for example, was a Quaker, a leading member of the Temperance Society, and a major shareholder in the Midland Railway Co and numerous other enterprises. It is impossible to say in which role he decried breaches of the licensing laws, since a common ideology permeated many of his activities. There are, however, occasions when religious organisations can be seen entering disputed areas of popular culture in their own right, rather than through the actions of prominent co-religionists. This was especially the case with drink.

Inglis notes that the churches were initially suspicious of the temperance movement, and that nonconformists in particular felt threatened by it.[146] The early history of the movement in Leicester reflects no

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146. Inglis op.cit., p.76.

such fears. Anglicans, such as Babbington, and nonconformists such as Thomas Cook and Joseph Dare were prominent among its early supporters. The first phase of the movement, based on the Leicester Temperance Society and the Temperance Hall nevertheless aimed to avoid political and religious controversy at a time when bitter divisions over matters such as the church rates issue were all too vividly remembered. After c.1870, the campaign took quite a different direction. The Rev. W. Evans, reviewing the development of the Blue Ribbon movement in 1882 remembered 'when it was the rule at the Temperance Hall that neither politics nor religion should be talked from the platform'. Now, he continued, that was a dead letter, and Gospel Temperance was securely established, with churches involved as never before.[147]

The capture by religious organisations of the temperance movement was neither sudden nor complete in the 1870s. Many Sunday schools established their Bands of Hope in the '50s and '60s, but parochial and congregational temperance societies, Rechabite and Grand Templar lodges continued to be formed throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. A local branch of the Church of England Temperance Society was established in 1876, the Bishop of Peterborough presiding at a meeting with Isaacs, Vaughan and Bennie on the platform.[148] Yet it was as late as 1903-4 that the town's methodists were involved in debate as to the necessity of teetotalism for church membership. In 1903, the Humberstone Road circuit of Primitive Methodists decided that abstinence was thus necessary.[149]

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147. LTC 21.4.82. For the earlier history of the temperance movement in Leicester, see chapter 4 below.

148. LJ 27.10.76.

149. WM 1.1903.

The peak of religious temperance fervour in the town occurred between 1880 and 1882, when the Blue Ribbon movement, by the use of revivalist and missionary methods comparable to those of the Salvation Army, established a district centre in Leicester. From that period there existed the equivalent of Mellor's 'sub-culture of evangelical teetotalism'.[150] The Blue Ribbon Movement was launched in Leicester in October 1881 with a three-week mission.[151] 3,025 people were already members by the end of the first week, but by the time Colonel Caldwell left Leicester, on October 24th, the army was claiming 14,000 members, of whom 7,000 were said to be new abstainers. It was reported that 'Some of the most notable drunkards have been won to the good cause, and not a few have been led to the saviour'.[15]

The next three months saw continued Blue Ribbon Army activity on a large scale, as many churches and chapels and, their temperance organisations put their energies behind it. F.B. Meyer was chairman of the campaign committee. During the period, over 100,000 signatures were collected although these were not necessarily new pledges. Some of them were not collected in Leicester itself. By April 1882, the town was the centre of a district organisation which included Melton, Stamford, Warwick, Oxford and Derby.[153] The work involved was so great that the Temperance Society employed another agent, G. Bastard, to administer Blue Ribbon pledges.

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150. Mellor, op.cit., p.166.

151. LC 4.2.1882.

152. LTC 7.10.1881; WM 10.1881.

153. LTC 6.4.1882; LC 4.2.1882; Meyer op.cit., pp.75ff.

For a time at least, Blue Ribbon enthusiasm swept all before it in revivalist fashion. Many churches had special services and meetings. Melbourne Hall had Gospel Temperance meetings, Curzon St Chapel Saturday evening meetings and Hill St Chapel Tuesday evening meetings to sing Booth's melodies. In January 1882, an average of 200 met daily for prayer meetings at the Temperance Hall, where drunkards gave their testimony and Meyer and Isaacs read lessons. Saturday evening meetings at the Temperance Hall attracted capacity audiences of 3,000. Not least, the movement captured the weekly Leicester Town Crier whose previously world-weary editor swung the journal wholly behind the cause. The announcement that R.T. Booth would return in February 1882 led to grandiose planning of public demonstrations. It was intended that five divisions, each with a band, should converge on the town centre from outlying meeting places, and that 'The army, having refreshed itself at several monster tea-meetings, will march arm-in-arm four abreast, to a grand mass meeting in the Floral Hall'.[154]

On the day of the return, over 25,000 were said to have processed, denominational rivalries dropped for the day. Several thousands assembled in the Floral Hall and there was 'the prophetic skyward ascent of a blue ribbon balloon'.[155] The following month saw missionary activity as intense as that of the previous October. The Salvation Warehouse was a centre for meetings of up to 2,000, as when the Salvation Army and Denman St chapel bands led the singing there. The surgeon, Temperance Society

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154. LTC 13.1.1882; 29.1.1882.

155. LTC 2.2.1882. The Leicester Chronicle reports that there were 20,000 at a rally in the Market Place and 6,500 at an evening meeting in the Floral Hall, LC 4.2.1882.

founder member and councillor, Lankester, presided and Fred Eugene, 'The Salvation Clown', formerly with Sanger's circus, was the main attraction. A month later, a similar crowd assembled at the same place to listen to addresses by men and women 'raised from the gutter of sin and intemperance to become preachers of the word'.[156]

Meetings were held throughout the town at nonconformist places of worship. Reviewing the three weeks of missionary activity, the Rev. W. Evans of Dover St., claimed that there had been 11,000 pledges taken, with a further 22,500 in the two following months. The Blue Ribbon Movement, he claimed, had revitalised and reunited the Temperance movement, with special organisations set up in 20 churches and chapels, and increased support for Local Option. The intimate association of religion and temperance, he felt, were confirmed.[157] Meyer later contended that the drink trade in Leicester was seriously damaged, that

> the publican party were suffering such serious losses in their trade, from the reformation which had come over some of their best customers, that they had reason to be seriously annoyed.

The Leicester Chronicle reported that several publicans left the trade in 1881-2 as a result of the campaign.[158]

After Cauldwell's final visit to Leicester, prior to his return to the USA in May 1882, for which the Temperance Hall was again crammed, enthusiasm seems to have died down. Meyer and the Rev. George Edwards formed a Leicester and District Temperance Union, giving bureaucratised form to the movement, but there was no repeat of the great public rallies.[159]

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156. LTC 10.2.1882; 24.3.1882.

157. LTC 21.4.1882.

158. Meyer, op.cit., p.75. LC 4.2.1882.

159. Melbourne Hall Magazine 11.1910.

The strong temperance sentiment of the 1880s informed magistrates' restrictions on new pub development and the assault on pub music in the 1884 Corporation Act, but in 1900 the Leicester Guardian reported that since the 1888 Temperance society jubilee and the Blue Ribbon Movement, 'things have been quiet in temperance circles'.[160] The demonstrations against new licences in the 1890s and the large Band of Hope rallies of the 1900s show that the movement was far from moribund before 1914, but there was never again to be the fervour of the 1880s. Temperance work remained fundamental to much church work in the period, and it is not without significance that the only religious organisation to permit sale of alcohol at any of its functions was the Catholic one at Holy Cross.

The failure of local option and Sunday Closing campaigns led the Leicester Guardian to doubt if any movement had ever spent more effort on less than the temperance movement.[161] But to measure its success in legislative terms alone is to misunderstand its aims. Quite apart from its influence on the licensing magistrates, the temperance movement succeeded in making the drink question and abstinence central issues in the culture of nonconformity. Nor were Anglicans untouched by it. In Bethnal Green, according to McLeod, the drink question came to be the single issue which most clearly separated churchgoers from the rest.[162] This may have been the case in poorer parts of Leicester as well. In the suburbs, where new churches achieved success, great efforts could be made to resist building of new pubs. The motivation behind the temperance

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160. LG 8.12.1900.

161. Melbourne Hall Magazine 7.1908. Over 5,000 drawn from 60 Bands of Hope attended a Whit Tuesday rally.

162. McLeod op.cit., p.115.

movement was never wholly a religious one but, particularly after 1880, temperance and the culture of nonconformity were indissolubly linked.

iii. The Sunday Question

Sabbatarianism made for a head-on clash between the religious conventions of the middle class and working class culture. As McLeod observes, for the middle and upper classes, Sunday observance was a strict ritual, 'in which every gesture had a meaning that the informed observer would recognise'.[163] Conventions changed over time, and much of the controversy about the Sunday opening of public buildings which recurred in Leicester in the 1870s and 1890s was the expression of conflicting attitudes within the middle class. Feelings continued to run high long after the period 1875-85 which McLeod sees as crucial in the West End.[164] In 1891, for example, two members of Bond St congregation felt obliged to resign because their pastor had suggested in a sermon a series of Sunday evening lectures instead of services. Lankester, a deacon of the church, thought the proposal more appropriate for a weekday, so it was withdrawn.[165] But by the early 20th century, even observers in suburban districts, where Sunday was far from riotous, noted little religious dedication on the part of the residents. The vicar of the Martyrs noted that there was 'not much defiant desecration; but very much mere pleasuring, cycling, visits to allotment gardens etc. Large numbers go to no place of worship'. In Highfields, the vicar of St. Saviour's reported that

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163. ibid. p.139. On Sunday laws, see John Wigley, The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday (1980).

164. McLeod, op.cit., p.231.

165. Bond St Church minutes, 28.1.1891.

> There is no disorder. The people are quiet and in the main sober. The Public Park close to is largely used in the summer especially when music is played. Cycling takes many out. Late market hours on Saturday lead to late rising and sometimes to a very lazy way of spending the day.[166]

In such areas, Sunday was becoming a day of rest rather than of worship. According to Fullerton, old strictures on appropriate activities in non-conformist households were easing, a trend which he much regretted. 'Old Sabbath forms and observances' he noted, 'have been minimised. The newspaper is not always put away on Sunday. Fiction is often read, and allowed before better reading. The Bible is much neglected'. In a desperate rearguard action, he hoped that it would at least not become a day for visiting.[167]

While middle class habits underwent a significant change at the end of the 19th century, it seems that in poor districts, Sunday observance was as little kept in 1900 as it had been in 1850. Throughout the period, there was a barrage of middle class criticism, aimed not only at sacrilege but also at the nuisance to respectable inhabitants. Dare was horrified in his first report to observe that 'Sunday is the worst day we have ... there is such drunkenness and fighting, that it is more like a village wake than the Lord's Day ...'.[168] There was extensive Sunday drinking, dog fighting, quarrelling and wandering in the fields. In 1875, a complaint was made that foot-races were being run for bets in Saffron Lane as men waited for the pubs to open.[169] Shops did business throughout the working

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166. Episcopal Visitation Records 1901. Leicester, The Martyrs and Leicester, St. Saviors.

167. Melbourne Hall Magazine 2.1909.

168. LDM 1846.

169. MFP 1.5.1875.

class districts, so much so that in 1878 the Watch Committee, spurred on by Isaacs, ordered a campaign against Sunday trading. The shopkeepers responded by establishing a pro-opening association, with a defence fund to pay the fines of those who were victimised. They claimed that 'of the people to whom they had gone round, nearly all depended almost entirely on Sunday for their trade'.

The argument that Sunday closing would transfer business to other days had little force since the police were manifestly unable to control Sunday trading. The ten cases in the second week of January 1878 were each made to pay costs of 3/-, a warning rather than a punishment. Any effect must have been very short-lived.[170] Incumbents from several town centre parishes railed against Sunday trading in 1901, 1905 and 1910. In St. Margaret's in 1901, tobacco, sweet, greengrocery and fish shops were open, as well as pubs. The vicar of St. Leonard's reported that he had persuaded only a few shops to close. From Christ Church, it was claimed that Wharf St and Belgrave Gate were the worst areas in the town for Sunday trading, an impression confirmed by the author of an article in the Leicester Guardian entitled 'Sunday Morning About Town'.[171] He found 73 shops open in Wharf St, which was a hive of activity where

> Some of the salesmen even cry their wares, and the vendors are busy skinning their rabbits, and sawing and hacking beef ... In the square (ie Russell Square) there are dozens of men lounging, waiting for the public houses to open.

Belgrave Gate had 40 shops open, and other thoroughfares such as Sanvey Gate and Churchgate were comparably busy. In All Saints Church, the

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170. LC 19.1.1878.

171. Episcopal Visitation Records 1901. Leicester, St. Margaret's, Leicester, St. Leonard's and Leicester, Christ Church.

congregation were singing; the reporter commented 'What a sweet note this is amongst the discords through which I have been passing'. Only in more prosperous areas, Southfields and the London Road, was it quiet, with only a few 'petty sweet shops' open, 'and occasionally there goes shrinking shamefacedly along, in their deshabille, on errands, the domestic drudges of some of these semi-respectable citizens'.[172]

For the respectable, Sunday-observing inhabitant of the poorer areas, the day must have been a torment. One such, signing him/herself 'TMR' of Brunswick Terrace, Taylor Street, reported the annoyance experienced by 'we who live in the slums' from children's games, marbles, tip-cat, football, cricket, skipping, duck (stone throwing) and from the use of pails from converted closets and ash-can lids as playthings. Gangs of youths, aged 16 and over, spent the day gaming and throwing stones, using empty houses and damaging them.[173] If anything, the receding urban boundary and the conversion of common land such as the Meadows into supervised parks must have increased the congestion of such districts on Sundays.

The Sunday question prompted conflicting responses from the town's middle class. The Sunday League had influential support in the 1850s as Sir Joshuah Walmesley, one of the town's MPs, was the promoter of a Sunday recreations bill in the House of Commons. Walmsley had been brought to Leicester by the Ellis family in 1847, and had the support of the Biggs Liberal-Radical faction. William Biggs himself had denied biblical authority for the Sabbath in Parliament.[174] The campaign was

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172. LG 13.10.1900.

173. LG 21.4.1900.

174. LC 23.2.1856. Hansard CXXVII 919-20.

ill-judged though, and alienated nonconformist support on which the Radicals depended. The Leicester Chronicle, the moderate Liberal paper, called for rejection of the bill, and a low-church Anglican such as Rev. W. Hill of Trinity Church, opposed the changes proposed 'because they were destructive of national morality, were incentives to a life of perpetual toil, and were incompatible with the sacredness of the Sabbath'.[175] Joseph Dare, usually a supporter of Biggs, gave no help on this occasion, considering that the Sunday League was 'beginning at the wrong end; they are trying to produce by external means, what can only be effected by internal, religious influences'.[176]

The urgings of J.P. Mursell, pastor of the fashionable, liberal congregation at the Belvoir St Chapel, failed in dissuading his hearers from 'a pharasiaical zeal' in opposing the Sunday League.[177] A major split was precipitated in Leicester radicalism. The Sunday question was central to the 1857 election, when John Ellis proposed John Dove Harris, a Leicester hosier, as Liberal candidate. J.F. Winks, formerly of the Leicester Complete Suffrage Association, led nonconformists against Walmsley, and was pelted with mud at the hustings for his pains. Walmsley was bottom of the poll, and a Conservative, Heygate, was elected for the first time since 1832.[178] There was no basis of support for the National Sunday League in Leicester's middle class, and the question was allowed to rest for nearly 20 years.

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175. LC 23.2.1856.

176. LDM 1857.

177. LC 23.1.56.

178. Wigley op.cit., pp.94ff. On the 1857 election, see VCH Leicester vol. IV pp. 220-21. LC 28.3.1857; 14.3.1857; 21.3.1857. LM 14.3.1857; 4.4.1857. LJ 20.3.1857. For support of the National Sunday League's point of view, see F.T. Mott, Sunday Duties (Leicester 1857) which proposes Sunday recreation as a means to achieving the salvation of the ungodly 'by means suited to their condition ...', p.15.

That attitudes were changing was clear in 1874 with the election of P.A. Taylor as MP, despite opposition from the Lord's Day Observance Society. Taylor (MP 1874-84) was an active supporter of the bill to open the British Museum on Sundays, introducing the bill a second time in 1877 despite the opposition of Leicester's junior member, McArthur.[179] By this time, there was greater middle class support for the encouragement of rational recreation on Sundays. In 1876, the Literary and Philosophical Society had sent a letter to the council in favour of Sunday opening of the museum and free library.[180] The ensuing debate within and outside the council reflected how much less agreement there now was over the issue. In August 1876, the council received a memo., signed by 1,029 ratepayers in favour of Sunday opening in the interest of 'the intellectual and moral improvement of the working classes' but the resulting motion was defeated in the council by 29 votes to 10.[181]

The anti-sabbatarians were not to be easily defeated, though, and mounted a town-wide campaign for their cause. In February 1877, a public meeting at the Temperance Hall presented an impressive array on the platform, including Alderman William Kempson, Councillors Francks, Windley and Hart, and representatives of the liberal nonconformist clergy Revs. J. Wood, A.F. Macdonald and J. Page Hopps. Wood layed the blame for opposition to their promotion of educational recreations at the door of Evangelical Nonconformity. Opposition at the meeting came in the form of a disorderly attempt by Revs. Gretton and J. Clow to introduce a hostile amendment,

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179. LC 16.6.1877.

180. CM 1/15: 27.6.1876.

181. CM 1/15: 29.8.1876.

without success. Counter-petitioning ensued, 17,371 requesting that the previous decision be adhered to as did the Leicester Sunday School Union teachers, while the council of the Leicester or Sunday Society and the Rev. J. Page Hopps made submissions to the opposite effect. The vote was lost 15-28, with 13 absent. The inconclusive result was insufficient to quell the Sunday Society, and a further petition, this time from 9,000 people, was presented in 1879. Reference was made to successful Sunday opening experiments in London, Dublin, Manchester, Birmingham, Keswick, Middlesborough, Maidstone and Wigan to no avail. After lengthy discussion, the motion was again defeated, this time 28-20.[182]

By 1890, the Council's resistance to Sunday entertainments was increasingly a rearguard action, given continued working class neglect of Sunday observance and the decline of old middle class rituals. Such public protest as there was in the intervening period, except in so far as every breach of Sunday trading laws and Sunday proprieties was an implied protest, came from the Secular Society who in 1885 defied the prohibition on Sunday cricket in the parks. In 1890, the matter was again brought up, and the ritual conflict of petition and counter-petition was again embarked upon. Councillors Collins and Butcher proposed a twelve month experiment of opening the Central Free Library reading room and reference library (not the labour-intensive borrowing department), the art gallery and museum on Sundays. While they had the support of the Leicester Trades Council, they were opposed by representatives for

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182. LC 17.2.1877. CM 1/16 pp.103-4, 117. Ibid. 28.1.79; CM1/17:18.5.79.

ward meetings in West St Mary's and Middle St Mary's wards, the YMCA, Salvation Army and numerous chapels, mission halls and Sunday Schools. If anything, nonconformity was more united behind the issue than it had been in 1857 or the 1870s. But its influence on the council was in decline; an amendment to submit the issue to a referendum was lost as the Mayor, Kempson, was absent from casting his vote after a 26-26 tie, and the original motion was carried 26-25.[183]

Opposition to the experiment took two forms; public protest was organised around the small majority, the strength of religious feeling generated and the injustices of Sunday Opening on the rates despite the conscientious objections of ratepayers. Meanwhile, the library committee, dominated by its founder, Stevenson, refused to put the council's resolution into practice. Neither was effective; a motion demanding the library committee's compliance precipitated Stevenson's resignation, and the experiment went ahead. The Sunday Opening issue was finally settled the following year when the experiment was made permanent. Further small changes, such as the provision of bands in the public parks on the rates on Sundays in 1895, confirmed the new balance of power in the council, although majorities were small (25-22 in 1895) and the Sabbatarian interest won the concession that bands would not play during the hours of religious services.[184]

The Sunday question shows clearly the decline of the cultural authority of religious institutions, and particularly of nonconformity. From domination of the council in the 1850s, it had become reduced to a special interest group, albeit a powerful one, by the 1890s. The change was accompanied

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183. CM 1/24:25.11.90.

184. CM 1/24:15.1.1891. CM 1/28:30.4.1895. CM 1/30:25.5.1897; 29.6.1897.

by an increasing stridency and willingness to resort to public protest and petitioning, the tactics of the temperance movement. The Sunday question also reflects the limited impact of religion on working class culture. While the Edwardian Sunday, a day of rest and rational amusements, was the product of the conflict of Sabbatarians and rational recreationists, large parts of the town treated it as they had always done, despite the spread of Saturday half holidays. It was still a day for leisure and shopping, the only one free from the constraints of paid employment. This was all the more so with the decline of St. Monday in the shoe trade after 1895. While the better-off working class in suburbs such as Highfields and the West End may have adapted a secular version of the respectable Sunday, although mixed with pastimes such as gardening and cycling, the inner areas remained impervious to exhortation, and probably also in the main to educational counter-attractions.

## E. Conclusion

Religious organisations were ubiquitous in the social life of Leicester in the period of this study. There was self-doubt concerning the effectiveness and at times the desirability of some of the provisions from a strictly religious point of view, but such concerns should not be permitted to dominate our understanding of the role of the churches. With few exceptions, 19th century religious organisations were committed to involvement with the society in which they existed, rather than quietist withdrawal. From the point of view of a study of recreation, they succeeded in establishing for themselves a role as provider of major leisure facilities in both declining central areas and in suburbs where they often provided most of the public buildings. Their worry was that such material provision was empty of spiritual content. Yet even in something as worldly as

the bazaar, dedicated principally to making money and occupying members of congregations in hours of what was essentially shop work rather than devotion, they succeeded in furthering a sense of common purpose which remained in keeping with the spirit of their religion. Late 19th century religion was not on the whole heroically spiritual. Those who thought it should be more so were to be found among the critics of popular recreation, in the more enthusiastic missions, most of which were assimilated to the dominant model after a while, or took refuge in private devotion or one of the smaller sects. It is a misunderstanding to view the range of penumbral activities as indicative of failure or of a desperate attempt to exploit recreation as a means of winning converts. Instead, they are an expression of the nature of churches intent on social engagement. At St. Paul's, the Leicester Domestic Mission, Melbourne Hall and elsewhere, differing initiatives were undertaken with commitment, not as expedients.

Churches were often very successful within specific communities. Men such as Dare, Mason and Meyer were influential locally and in town-wide debate. Churches were the principle providers of subsidised recreational facilities, especially on a very local basis. Alongside libraries and board schools, their halls and mission stations were the major foci for socialisation in many neighbourhoods other than the pub and the street. Suburban districts often lacked even the pub. This is not to claim that churches came to dominate the social life of whole communities, but their facilities were used by a much larger number of people than those who attended services. Churches still played a major part in stage managing rites de passage, but they also contributed to the development in Leicester of adult education, sport and music (especially choral singing) and played an important part in Saturday night entertainment through their socials and dances.

While the theological content of much of this was small, or at best informal, church leaders and prominent churchgoers continued to play a major role in public debate throughout the 19th century. While the outcome of the Sunday question shows that the strictest views on issues of religious observance and public morals could not ultimately be maintained in the face of changing middle class opinion, the strength of largely nonconformist opinion on the Bench remained considerable. In part because the town's leaders in the first decade of the 20th century represented a generation educated in the severer moral climate of the mid-Victorian bourgeoisie, censoriousness remained a characteristic of the town's elite in its attitude to recreation throughout the period. Moreover, the influence of churchmen such as Meyer was sufficient to spread it to sections of the working and lower-middle classes. The weakness of commercial leisure in Leicester, evinced in the following three chapters suggests that, if there was rivalry between nascent entertainment industries and religious organisations, the latter were by no means unambiguous losers.

## Chapter 4

## Drink and Temperance

The centrality of the debate about drink to the development of popular culture in the 19th century has been well known to social historians since Brian Harrison's pioneering work. The stimulus which temperance sentiment gave to the movement for rational recreation and, on the other hand, the role played by the pub as a centre for both organised and informal pastimes have been seen as manifestations of a profound cultural divide within society. The aim of this chapter is to assess the importance of both the drink trade and the temperance movement on the development of leisure in Leicester, both at the level of institutions (eg numbers of pubs, bye-laws, temperance societies) and of individual patterns of sociability.[1]

### A. Drinksellers and Drinkers

#### i. Introduction

The problems of writing about the culture of the pub in the past are well known. Few sympathetic observers and fewer participants described

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1. The dominant school of writing about drink and temperance in 19th century Britain is that of Brian Harrison and such former students of his as Lambert and Dingle. Their work has more generally concerned the temperance movement and its impact on licensing legislation and the Liberal Party. See Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (1971), Brian Harrison and B. Trinder, 'Drink and Sobriety in an Early Victorian County Town: Banbury 1830-1860', EHR Suppl. 1969; A.E. W.R. Lambert, 'Drink and Sobriety in Wales', Univ. of Wales Ph.D, 1975; A.E. Dingle, The Campaign for Prohibition in Victorian England (1980). Harrison turns his attention more specifically to drink sellers in 'Pubs' in Dyos and Wolff (eds.), The Victorian City (1973). On the involvement of licensed victuallers with national politics, see Basil Long Crapster, 'Our Trade, Our Politics', Harvard Univ. Ph.D 1949. On pubs, see Girouard, Victorian Pubs (1975) and Alan Crawford and Robert Thorne, Birmingham Pubs 1890-1939 (Birmingham 1975). The history of the brewing industry is described in K.H. Hawkins and C.L. Pass, The Brewing Industry (1979), John Vaizey, The Brewing Industry 1886-1951 (1960) esp. ch. 1, and P. Matthias, The Brewing Industry in England (Cambridge 1959).

what went on inside public houses. No drinker appeared as such before Select Committees to celebrate the positive aspects of the pub. Several historians have catalogued the services provided by pubs, and there are accounts of such things as drinking customs associated with work, friendly society ritual and important events in family life, but it is much less easy to come to terms with the informal socialising which nevertheless constituted one of the principal attractions of the pub.

The Leicester material shares these problems. Apart from Tom Barclay's autobiography, most of the sources are external to the world of the working-class pub-goer. They lead us to examine those issues which presented observers - journalists, missionaries, policemen and magistrates - with the greatest cause for concern. Yet while their enquiries into such aspects of pub culture as drinking by young people, singing, prostitution and gambling were framed in uncritically ideological terms, they provide evidence of what went on in some pubs some of the time in considerable detail. Of course, they concentrated on the most lurid aspects of the pub at the expense of the culture of the moderate drinker, and in so doing tended to confirm temperance party views that drinking inevitably led to disorder. The sources present most starkly the conflict between a hedonism which they usually associate with the poorest and most marginal members of society and the sober seriousness which the more powerful thought was appropriate for the poor as well as for themselves. In so doing, these sources highlight those aspects of the pub which put drinking at the centre of debate and conflict over the control of popular culture.

ii. Drunkenness

The inadequacy of crime statistics as a measure of drunkenness was freely admitted by the 1854 Select Committee on Public Houses. It was realised that they recorded only convictions, and that they reflected varying levels of policing. Nevertheless, Leicester's Chief Inspector Duns and his successors were always willing to put weight on such returns, and Duns's belief in 1885 that the figures were 'not very encouraging' was a spur to further police vigilance.[2] The number of convictions in Leicester each year was low by national standards (see Table 4.1). Such figures as may be found in newspaper reports, which do not enable a complete sequence to be built up, suggest historically high numbers of convictions in the 1880s which were not again achieved until the First World War. Parallel to national statistics for drink consumption, convictions for drunkenness in Leicester were far higher in the 19th century than at any time in the interwar years, given an increased population. (see Table 4. 2). This may suggest a much higher level of public drunkenness, a powerful stimulus to the temperance movement.

Sophisticated attitudes to the causes of excessive drinking and alcoholism were slow to develop, although Dare, at least in his earlier reports, could give environmental as well as moral reasons for it. By the late 1850s, though, his explanation was largely in terms of innate character and defective socialisation.[3] Later prohibitionist campaigning

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2. 'There are no sufficient statistics to enable the average amount of drunkenness in the United Kingdom to be stated with any approach to accuracy'. PP 1854 XIV (243). LC 29.8.85.

3. LDM 1848, 1850. 1852. 'The sensual man, if he be enriched by ampler pay, only becomes the greater debauchee'. LDM 1859.

Table 4.1

No. alehouses and beerhouses per 000 & No. proceedings for drunkenness per 000 in large towns in 1875.

| | On-Licenses | Proceedings |
|---|---|---|
| Liverpool | 4.6 | 36.84 |
| Manchester | 6.7 | 25.9 |
| Newcastle | 6.22 | 22.17 |
| Salford | 5.61 | 21.32 |
| Nottingham | 5.4 | 8.92 |
| Leeds | 3.6 | 6.6 |
| Birmingham | 5.3 | 6.4 |
| Leicester | 5.34 | 4.77 |
| Sheffield | 5.7 | 4.63 |

Source: MFP 20.2.75 from Chief Constable's Annual Report.

Table 4.2

No. of proceedings for drunkenness

| Year | No. | Year | No. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1863 | 274 | 1886 | 607 |
| 1864 | 350 | 1906 | 469 |
| 1865 | 423 | 1913 | 504 |
| 1866 | 386 | 1914 | 630 |
| 1867 | 315 | 1915 | 490 |
| 1868 | 304 | 1916 | 303 |
| 1869 | 349 | 1917 | 99 |
| 1870 | 348 | 1918 | 102 |
| 1871 | 402 | 1919 | 169 |
| 1872 | 490 | 1920 | 173 |

Sources: CM 42/10:22.10.72; LP 10.2.1906; City of Leicester Chief Constable's Report 1930.

supplemented blame of the moral failings of drinkers with that of the immorality of the trade, and did correspondingly little for understanding the chronic drinker. Leicester had a small home for inebriate women, privately run, but no mention was made in the council in 1900 when a Watch Committee report was submitted concerning the possibility of establishing a reformatory. Councillor Royce went some way to seeing the question in terms other than moralistic ones when he told the council that 'in some cases drunkenness may be a vice, but it might sometimes be a disease'. The council was equally cautious in its response, preferring to set aside £1,000 for seven places at a Bristol institution over the next 25 years, rather than establishing its own.[4]

iii. Sunday drinking

The practice of Sunday drinking brought into conflict the definitions of how the day of rest was best spent in working-class and middle-class communities. Most of the details of Sunday drinking were much as described by Thomas Wright. Legal cases reveal secret drinking before opening time, with lookouts, sometimes the landlord himself, at others paid touters, saving drinkers the need to take turns themselves.[5] Evidence against a house in 1870 described how 'the back door was left open and the window tapped as soon as the police were seen coming'.[6] At the Tiger, Northgate

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4. PP 1899; LC 28.4.1900.

5. Thomas Wright, Some Habits of the Working Class (1867), pp. 224-26. LC 28.8.69; LDM 1857.

6. LC 27.8.70.

Street, the job of lookout was known as 'the office', and was performed by the landlord who gave notice when a constable was 2-300 yards away. In order to get round this, the police used plain-clothes spies and the Temperance Society employed an ex-policeman and a bailiff to try to get information. Most of the cases which were brought successfully involved only small numbers of drinkers, although the Temperance Society's solicitor claimed on one occasion that 150 people had been seen entering a certain beerhouse at various times between 10 and 12 on a Sunday morning. (See Table 4.3).[7]

Table 4.3

Prosecutions for breach of closing regulations, December 1858

| | Sun. am | Sun. 2pm-7pm | Sun. 10pm* | Mon. | No data |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| fined | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| dismissed | 1 | 5 | - | - | 1 |
| remanded | - | - | 1 | - | - |
| | 4 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 2 |

* includes one case of 12.15 am Monday.

Source: Leicester Chronicle 11.12.58.

Joseph Dare, E.S. Ellis and others hoped for national or local legislation to close pubs for all but off-sales on Sundays, but any such hope was unrealistic after the Sunday trading riots of 1855 and the demonstration in Leicester's Temperance Hall against the suggestion.

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7. The bailiff, Glover, was not successful, though, on one occasion appearing in court to give evidence when showing signs of having visited a public house immediately before the case. Such incidents, like the many cases of police drunkenness, were humiliating to the Temperance movement and to the force. LC 30.9.71. On the Tiger, see LC 27.8.70. On Temperance accusations, see LC 28.8.69.

(see below pp.246-9). In 1899, the majority report of the Royal Commission on the licensing laws reasserted that total Sunday closing was still 'too far in advance of public opinion in England'. Even so, efforts were made through police action to restrict Sunday drinking in Leicester as far as possible to the legal hours, and in 1858 there was a major initiative during the course of which 19 publicans appeared for alleged infringement of the law.[8] This did not stamp the practice out in the long run, and at the 1870 Brewster Sessions, six out of seven cases against existing licenses were due to Sunday offences. In 1885, there were a further five such cases. Sabbatarian fears seem to have been equally strong after the turn of the century, and so-called bogus clubs offered ample opportunity for people to drink on Sundays out of hours. In 1900, Councillor Windley told a conference on Sunday closing at the Temperance Hall that 'The great mass of the people no more thought of spending their time in the Public House than he did' but the practice was evidently still widespread.[9]

iv. Late-night drinking

The restriction of drinking after midnight did not require so protracted a campaign. Before 1872, beerhouses had already been obliged to close between midnight and 4am under the 1830 Act, although there was no such restriction on fully-licensed houses. Most Leicester pubs closed at 11 or 12 anyway and earlier closing could be a means of avoiding police attention. Following a caution, the landlord of the Royal George was said to have closed before midnight more often. The 1872 Act demanded closing between 11 and 6 and was soon enforced.[10]

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8. LC 28.8.69; LC 11.12.58.

9. LC 24.2.1900. On Sunday observance in Leicester, see Ch. 3 above, pp.195-203.

10. The secretary of the Licensed Victuallers' Association told a meeting of the Early Closing Association that only 3 out of 310 members closed after 12. LC 24.4.69. On Royal George, see LC 22.10.70.

Prior to 1872, certain areas were very noisy after midnight, especially on Saturdays. The Marquis of Hastings, Sanvey Gate, a resort of Prize-fighters and centre of frequent disturbances, was on at least one occasion the starting place for races run along the street in the early hours of the morning. Dare contrasted the quietness after the 1872 Act with what had gone before when 'Usually ... there were 2 or 3 gatherings of men, women and children, quarrelling, fighting and uttering the most disgusting language'.[11]

Events surrounding the initial enforcement of the act suggest that the centre of town was another such area for late drinking. The first night on which the new law was in force was a Monday (19th August). The police had been instructed by the justices to circulate a notice to this effect at the request of the Licensed Victuallers' Association. The night, which was not a time in the week which was associated with heavy drinking in Leicester, passed off fairly peacefully. There was nothing comparable to the stone throwing which had taken place in Exeter. The Chronicle reported only one incident which took place after the closing of a large town-centre pub and vaults, the clients of which gathered around the Clock Tower and sang 'We won't go home till morning' before being moved on by the police.[12] There was much more trouble the following Saturday, although the Chronicle was angered by what it saw as exaggeration of the incident in the London press, claiming that 'The whole affair was no more than a vulgar street row'. Respectable licensed victuallers were not involved, and many closed at 10.30 in order to avoid trouble.

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11. LDM 1872. LC 28.8.69.

12. LC 24.8.72.

Disorder was anticipated, and 40 extra Police Constables were brought in from the county. After 11, an 'immense crowd' gathered at the Haymarket, although most seemed to be there as spectators. For a while there was some confusion the crowd emitting 'unmusical groans and hootings', before a leader, Isaac Stevens, described in the press account as 'an old offender', spoke to the assembly. Refusing to move on, he struck a policeman and was arrested. The remainder of the incident consisted of efforts to free Stevens during which stones were thrown at the police and helmets knocked off. The police succeeded in blocking off certain streets and Stevens was taken to Charles St. police atation. By 1 am the crowd had dispersed.[13]

The weakness of resistance, and the absence of later cases of violation of the 11pm close, suggest that publicans were content to administer the new law, and that drinkers were little worried by the loss of late hours. Most publicans had shut before 12 anyway, and the new hours favoured those who had no desire to compete for trade by offering late drinking. Sunday morning drinking was undoubtedly more popular.

v. Prostitution

The legal standing of pubs as regards prostitution was ambiguous. Clearly they were not permitted to serve as brothels, nor to permit soliciting on the premises. For a pub to be known as a resort of prostitutes was to establish a reputation as a disorderly house, which was grounds for non-renewal of its licence. The Ostrich in Belgrave Gate, a beerhouse, lost its licence in 1869 on police evidence that it was 'the resort of

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13. LC 31.8.72.

prostitutes and men of a very low character'. Nevertheless, a judgement of Mr. Justice Blackburn had established that prostitutes were not necessarily 'notoriously bad characters' and so had as much right to buy a drink in a public house as anyone else. As a solicitor speaking on behalf of a Leicester publican said, 'So long as the evil of prostitution existed, prostitutes must have refreshments supplied to them by someone'.[14] But it remained the case that any publican knowingly selling drinks to prostitutes was open to the attention of temperance reformers and the police, who seem to have made a determined effort to drive prostitutes out of pubs in the early 1870.

In 1870, Robert Guilford, licensee of the Royal George, Lower Charles Street, lost his licence on account of the 'assembly of bad characters' which frequented the house.[15] These were prostitutes from Yeoman Square. Since it was unprecedented for Leicester magistrates to take away an existing licence, although within their powers, Guilford appealed, but lost. The extended nature of the case produced a large amount of evidence which enables a fairly detailed impression of the life of the pub to be obtained.

The pub had long been the base in Leicester of the Stonemason's Club, a trade society, where itinerant masons could get relief and, presumably, board and lodging. Officials of the club gave evidence at the appeal that they made regular visits to the pub on club business, much of which was conducted in a back room. The secretary, relieving officer and a former secretary all gave good reports of the Royal George, and claimed

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14. LC 28.8.69; 22.10.70.
15. LC 22.10.70; 27.8.70; 3.12.70.

that such women as were served there did not linger. Read, the secretary, 'Had seen women come in and have a glass of ale and go away, the same as at other bars in Leicester'. These club men also spoke of improvements in the running of the house which had taken place under Guilford's management. Their evidence was hardly impartial though. Should the licence be abolished, the club would lose its premises, and a new landlord may not have been so accommodating to such a society.

It is of interest that the same pub should serve at the same time as the headquarters of a club for skilled artisans and as a resort of prostitutes without apparent disharmony. It is possible that the two groups were in separate parts of the pub or that Guilford really was as strict as he made out, so that prostitutes did not have the opportunity to offend other, more respectable customers, but it could equally well be argued that such pubs were by no means as unambiguously disreputable as reformers tried to assert. By no means all respectable workers shared the repulsion which philanthropists such as Dare or Henry Solly, advocate of working men's clubs, thought that they should.

From evidence provided by both sides, however, it appears that the Royal George had a long history of disorderliness, and neighbours reported annoyance from drinkers. Guilford's solicitor claimed that it was better than under the previous owner, up to March 1869, while the magistrates' case maintained that it was getting worse. Guilford had been aware of its reputation, and had himself been fined 42/- in 1869 for permitting drunkenness. Since then, he had been visited by the police several times, and had been warned that there were prostitutes in the house. On one occasion, there had been two prostitutes and several married women present with their husbands when a constable entered and

told him 'You have many prostitues here'. He claimed that the two had 2d of gin each, drank standing against the counter and left as soon as they had finished drinking. The evidence of Detective Sergeant Langdale was rather different. He went in three or four times a week, between 9 and 11pm, and usually found four or five prostitues there, both standing and sitting, and had seen men buy them drinks. Sometimes he had even seen them take men there for half an hour before proceeding to Yeoman Square. Guilford had been warned six or eight times, and on one occasion had replied 'If I don't have these, I shan't have any'. Langdale thought that the pub was the worst of any of the 200 or so bars in Leicester where loose women went to drink. A second policeman, Sergeant J. Bowles, corroborated, and said that he had seen prostitutes and men going to Yeoman Square at 1 am and that he had had to disperse quarrels, though not in the two months between the Brewster Sessions and the appeal. A local hosiery manufacturer added that the neighbouring Anchor and Royal Standard pubs were also used by prostitutes, and another that Yeoman Square was 'a den of thieves and whores'.

The police evidence almost certainly exaggerates the nature of the house. There is much attempted incrimination by association. Langdale was criticised for failing to make written reports of his warnings to the Chief Constable. The two hosiery manufacturers were contradicted by a third, who admitted being a frequent visitor to the pub, who claimed that it was improving.

Guildford undoubtedly knew that he was dealing with prostitutes. In his own evidence, he said that he knew that Nell Topley, one of his customers, kept a brothel. He did not know that Rose Brown was also a brothel keeper, but had got to know that she was a prostitute, and

had refused to serve her again. Ultimately, he was unable to deny the offence, and cannot have pleased the Licensed Victualler's Association, whose solicitor had defended him at the Brewster Sessions, with his defence that

> if the magistrates were to take away the licenses of all the publicans at whose houses a glass of drink was supplied to prostitutes, they would have to take away those of three-fourths of the licensees of the town.

In the absence of any general account of prostitution in Leicester, it is impossible to evaluate either this or Langdale's earlier statement about the extent of the links between pubs and prostitution. The police continued to challenge licenses on similar grounds throughout the 1870s. Prostitution was impossible to eradicate by such policing though. Blatant displays inevitably attracted police attention, as in 1905 when the landlord of the Tramway Inn, Belgrave Gate, was fined £10 - the maximum under the 1872 Licensing Act - for permitting the use of his premises by prostitutes. A constable reported that he found 12 prostitutes there, two of whom *did a cake-walk*. Others danced lifting their skirts. The landlord, Thomas Spence, offered as defence only that he had been absent, leaving his wife and son in charge. As in the Guilford case, there was relatively weak landlord control of what went on in the pub, in the latter case due to a recent change of ownership and here because of absence. More experienced landlords, or those of stronger character, were perhaps more likely to avoid trouble by imposing greater discretion on their customers.

### vi. Young people and drink

In the second half of the 19th century, much of the moral suasionist effort of the temperance movement was directed towards minors, on the principle that they could be caught before drinking had become a habit.

Both the pledging of young people and the quest for prohibitionist legislation to protect adults were long-term solutions which could reconcile slow progress and millenarian objectives. Alongside the promotion of bodies such as the Band of Hope was an acute awareness that young people were far from innocent about drink, and that, however many took the pledge, a large number of minors were drinkers. Temperance workers tried to bring the issue to public attention and then attack those public houses and music saloons which catered for the young.

Drinking among young people was nothing new in the 1860s when it began to be picked out by reformers as a matter for urgent attention. Eli Kitchen, a beerhouse keeper, remembered that before 1830, youths had met in a pub in St. Peter's Lane for dancing. An item in the Leicester Chronicle in 1851 noted that young people were smoking, drinking and gambling in a so-called Temperance Coffee House. Joseph Dare's observations on the subject begin in the late 1850s and become frequent, even central in his reports in the following decade, often in conjunction with his demand for public education.[16]

Certain objective changes may be identified which may have contributed to a growing concern about young drinkers. Leicester's most rapid growth in the 1860s coincided with the establishment of the domestically-based shoemaking industry, which, like the hosiery industry before it, gave early economic independence, especially to those in occupations such as winding and finishing. The problem of boy labour was to remain an issue until the 1890s. In addition, as Dare observed, many of the immigrants

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16. LC 1.5.69; 8.2.51; LDM 1857 passim.

came from rural areas and were 'intoxicated with town life'. Many young people lived in lodgings, and couldn't stay at home when not working even had they wanted to. A further stimulus to drinking among youths may have been that suggested by a London City Missionary to the 1854 Select Committee, namely that beerhousekeepers, on account of their precarious financial position, were forced to exploit any potential market, and that youth provided an ideal opportunity.[17]

Tom Barclay's memoirs give a more positive view. As a wheel turner at a rope works and later a winder and boot-finisher's helper, Barclay was an example of the casual, unskilled, auxiliary boy labour which Dare and trade unionists alike held as the greatest threat and the most threatened by corruption. Barclay's earlier encounters with drink, fetching jugs from the Woodboy and awaiting the return home of his drunken father do not seem to have removed the glamour of drink from his imagination. He recalled the resentment felt by boys of their exclusion from the adult, drinking world which they saw and heard so much about, and wrote of 'Drink, ah, a great thing, a manly thing! No danger, everybody drinks and talks about drink, and looks for drink, and boasts about drink'. Barclay and his peers entered the world of drink through the Free and Easy, which they usually attended on Saturdays. Young people's drinking seems to have revolved very much about music, dancing and courtship. Such was

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17. LDM 1875; 1848. PP1854 XIV (265). Cf. Rev. D.J. Vaughan, vicar of St. Martin's: 'The wages of juvenile labour are now as high, that boys and girls, long before they are out of their teens, can earn much more than enough to keep them. They pay their parents so much a week to board and lodge them, and still have plenty to spend on dress and amusements. You may see them aping the man and woman, - the boy with his pipe, and the girl with her tawdry finery, - in a way that would be grotesque and ludicrous, if it were not so inexpressibly sad'. D.J. Vaughan, Domestic Life or Parents and Children (Leicester 1873), p.8.

the powerful attraction of the culture of drink that Barclay had little difficulty in overcoming the restraint offered by his reputation as a 'voteen' (a devout Catholic) in the Irish community. A Dominican mission against intemperance made some impact, but not a lasting one. Barclay recalled that 'Some of us kept away from the public house a whole fortnight' but no more.[18]

Until Acts of 1886, 1901 and 1909, sales of drink to young people were not restricted by the law, and publicans catering for that part of the market were not guilty of any crime. Nevertheless, carrying on such a trade could be used in attempts to destroy the reputation of licensees. In 1869, Jason Cooper, beerhousekeeper of the Sit Thomas White, Cank Street, was refused a certificate after opposition by the Temperance Society's solicitor, who used police evidence. The house was said to be the resort of 12-16 year olds, especially on Saturday night when witnesses had seen as many as 50 boys and girls in the house, drinking and singing. In 1871, another beerhouse, the Leather Bottle, was refused a licence following unapproved building work. Under normal circumstances, this would have earned a caution. Evidence was marshalled to show the bad character of the house and the youth of its clientele. The temperance missionary, William Wicks, said that he had seen a chairman in the club room, using a hammer to call for order, which indicates that this was a free and easy. Others described the audience as aged between 13 and 25.[19]

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18. Barclay, op.cit., p.30. On Free and Easies, music saloons etc. see ch. 5 below, pp.304-6.

19. LC 28.8.69.

By the time minimum age legislation was introduced, the decline of juvenile employment, compulsory schooling and the suppression of Free and Easies in 1884-5 had considerably lessened the means and opportunities for young people to drink.[19a]

vii. Beerhouses and clubs

The antithesis of strong magisterial control of the sale of drink was represented by these two institutions, which at different times were portrayed by their opponents as standing for all that was worst in popular culture. Until the acts of 1869 and 1902 respectively, each operated virtually outside the licensing laws, and there was little the bench could do to control their establishment or operation. Licensed victuallers were among those adding their voice to denunciation of such establishments, much as factory owners criticised the malpractices of workshop masters in the shoe and hosiery trades, which represented unwelcome competition and served as scapegoats for the prevalence of drunkenness.

The Select Committee of 1854 stated bluntly that 'The beershop system has been a failure'.[20] Successive witnesses referred to the low class of drinkers and publicans found in beerhouses, the adulteration of their beer, and the lack of supervision. Apologists for the beerhouse are difficult to find, and efforts such as those of Thomas Ridley Jackson, chairman of the Retail Brewers Association, to defend them for their provision of a valuable service to honest workers and their wives, were always dismissed as special pleading.[21]

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19a. On the legal exclusion of children from the pub, see Nicholas Dorn, Alcohol, Youth and the State (1983), pp.38-42.

20. PP 1854 xiv Report.

21. 'It is customary for mechanics to go out with their wives somewhere on Sunday, and when they go out they want some little refreshment'. Ibid. Evidence of Thomas Ridley Jackson.

Opinion in the Leicester press ran along similar lines. The Leicester Journal carried several reports of early reports of 'Tom and Jerry shops', deploring their encouragement of cards, dominoes, late hours, dancing, fiddling and drinking by youths. Dare was appalled by their rapid spread in the Sanvey-gate area, and saw them as agencies keeping the people poor despite the improved trade of the town in the 1860s.[22] The severity of the magistrates' use of their new powers of beerhouses in 1869 (see below p.260-1) indicates how seriously the threat was taken.

Leicester's beerhouse keepers responded by forming an association in 1866 (see below p.234-5) to campaign for the legal status of licensed victuallers and corresponding social esteem. The only attempt by one of their number to defend beerhouses as they were which has been uncovered during the course of the present study was a series of letters to the press entitled A Word in Defence of Beershops by Eli Kitchen of the Rutland Arms, Wharf Street. He claimed that the evils which they were accused of predated 1830, that most beerhousekeepers were honest and that magistrate control was conducive to favouritism. The temperance attack, Kitchen argued, was one-sided and undemocratic. The beerhouse was especially convivial for the working class for

> Whilst the well-to-do tradesmen can go to a respectable inn and get his glass of ale for twopence, the mechanic or artisan can obtain a full half-pint of this wholesome and strengthening beverage, in a neat room, with a good fire or morning paper to look at, for five farthings.[23]

Beerhouses offered company and light-heartedness according to Kitchen, but his fireside idyll of healthy drinking and good cheer contrasts sharply with Dare's portrait of beerhousekeepers, about whom he asks

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22. LJ 20.5.31; 2.12.31. LDM 1865, 1868.

23. LC 1.5.69 passim.

> Why should a strong fellow of indifferent character, with a good trade and plenty of work, throw it aside, and be allowed to set up one of these places, that he might lead an idle life and indulge his depraved tastes in dogs and gambling, in pugilists and drink?[24]

A beerhouse provided a by-income, security and a measure of independence.[25] To buy a house outright was expensive. An advertisement in 1879 offered one for sale at £120,[26] but prior to 1869, any house valued at £10 p.a. could be converted into one. From that date, it is clear from compensation cases under the 1902 Licensing Act that breweries put up capital and tenancy agreements were drawn up. The tenant was expected to pay a premium on taking over a house. The attack on such investment by small savers by the bench after 1869 was criticised by a speaker at the Licensed Victuallers' dinner of the same year. Taking away a beerhouse licence was said to be 'like confiscating the savings of years, which had been invested in the beershop; and some of the beershopkeepers had thus been nearly ruined'.[27] The beerhouse need not be seen only in the condemnatory terms of their opponents. In many cases, they may have constituted an important part of the working-class family economy.

Beerhouses survived the legal changes of 1869 as a kind of second class public house. As the bench restricted the activities of both beerhouse and fully-licensed house, stimulus was given to the establishment of drinking clubs which were yet more offensive to the temperance movement, and which brought about a brief alliance between the latter and licensed victuallers.

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24. LDM 1869.

25. Cf. Charles Shaw, When I was a Child (1903), describing the culture of workers in the Potteries in the 1840s: 'If a man could get a barrel of beer into his little coal cellar he became a beer-seller. I didn't know what this meant at the time but I frequently saw and heard the contrivances and purposes of certain men discussed, by which they might become beer-sellers. They wanted to eke out a living for themselves ...'.

26. Midland Jackdaw 8.8.79.

27. LC 13.11.69. Similar arguments were made about off-licences in the 1900s.

Clubs were of two main types. Bona fide clubs had properly constituted membership and often aims other than providing drinking facilities. These included political and working men's clubs as well as sports clubs and friendly societies. The magistrates were largely concerned with bogus clubs which had grown up in Leicester since the 1870s. The Licensed Victuallers' solicitor told the 1873 Brewster Sessions of the rapid growth of the Patriotic club where, according to police evidence, 'debauchery of every kind' took place. The trade's proposal was to extend licensing hours in order to reduce the demand for such clubs. The same argument was used in an attempt to get a 7 rather than a 6-day licence for the Midland Railway Hotel, Saffron Lane, and the Avenue Hotel, Aylestone in 1895.[28] The problem of the bogus club was a major issue in the Peel Commission's report (1898) and, coupled with a probable increase in the number of such clubs in the 1890s, was followed by police offensives in Leicester in 1900 and again after the establishment of the Register of Clubs in 1905.[29] Two prosecutions arising from these raids received extensive press coverage, and enable the workings of such institutions to be observed.

The Denman Street Club, or East Leicester Working Men's Club, was observed by police and informers in February and March 1900 and its committee and owner prosecuted at the end of March.[30] The premises belonged to

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28. LC 24.8.95.

29. For Peel Commission Report, see PP 1899.XXXV.

30. The following account is based on LC 11.3.1900 and 14.4.1900.

Thomas Fox, landlord of the Fish and Quart, Churchgate, who had bought them in May 1899 for £530 and spent £300 on their conversion. The upstairs room was fitted out as a public house. Fox, who avoided conviction, said that it was one of a number of such premises which he owned, hence the lack of close supervision. The committee consisted of 14 men, eight of whom were convicted and whose occupations are therefore known. Four were shoe workers, three labourers and one a stonemason. Their ages ranged from 23 to 52, with most in their 30s. Two of the committee, as Fox knew beforehand, had already been prosecuted for selling liquor without a licence in Wigston, Leics. The club seems to have been formed as a successor to the Leicester Latimer Conservative Working Men's Club, whose bank account and some of whose members it took over. The implication is that such an ostensibly political club may by the end of its life have declined into a mere drinking club, a fate shared by some efforts to run a Labour Club in the town.[31]

The club employed a full-time steward and doorkeeper, and occasionally paid a member to serve as a waiter. Witnesses described those present in the club, numbering over 50 on Saturday night and 20-30 on Sunday evening, as 'of all classes' and ages. On one occasion, a policeman reported seeing over 50 'boys and girls' clamouring to get in, despite the doorkeeper's refusal. They claimed that they had been admitted in the past. Informers were signed in by members of the committee on payment of 1d fee even though they had not seen them before. One committee member offered the defence that the informer looked a very respectable young man. Neither this, the club's late hours (there was still singing at

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31. On the Labour Club, the Club & Institute Union and the labour movement's attitude to drink, see pp.419-425.

11.30pm on Saturday) nor the failure to observe the Sabbath satisfied the magistrates. The club was declared not to be bona fide, and that its real function was the sale of alcohol for the profit of the committee, a blatant attempt to trade in drink without a licence. It aimed to exploit the restrictions which the licensing laws put on the activities of the trade, especially those governing hours and music. Most striking is the involvement of a licensed victualler, who must have confirmed the Leicester bench in their dislike of multiple licence holding and the tied house system, both of which divorced ownership from supervision.[32]

The case did not succeed in warning off all other such ventures. In 1905, the Tower Club and Institute was closed for similar offences.[33] Despite the club's stated aims of 'mental and moral improvement and rational recreation', Fielding-Johnson found it to be 'nothing more than a drinking den. Its only other recreational activity was card playing. Inspection of its books revealed that 7d a week was spent on newspapers against 7 guineas on drink. The club claimed rapid growth from 29 members in 1904 to 225 in 1905, but such statistics are not very dependable.[34] The club profited from after-hours sales to casual passers-by. One constable

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32. The club closed in 1901. CIJ 8.1901. On links between the trade and bogus clubs, see Asquith's introduction of the 1908 Licensing Bill in the House of Commons: 'For the past few months not a week has passed that I have not had brought to my notice cases in which a suppression of a licence under the Act of 1902 has been followed almost immediately by the upgrowth of a club, not in the same premises, but very often next door, carrying on precisely the same business, often tied to the same brewer, who finances the whole affair ... frequented by the same class of persons, the only difference being that no licence duty was paid and that there are no restrictions as to the hours of opening and closing ...', quoted in Philip Snowden, Socialism and the Drink Question (1908), p.138.

33. LC 30.9.1905.

34. Of 160 members investigated, following up entries in the club's membership roll, 72 had given false names or addresses, and 52 were no longer members.

saw 28 men and 14 women leave the club between 1 and 1.55am, four of them drunk, and on another occasion he was passing when 'a man on the step beckoned him, and on going up he [the man] pushed the door open and pointed to two bottles just inside the door and invited him to have a drink'. He reported that, as in the previous case, the interior was made up like a pub, with bar, concert room and another small room.

The bogus club shared some of the unregulated, easygoing nature of the old beerhouse, but there are important differences. Clubs were clandestine, with doorkeepers and surreptitious accosting of passers by. They relied wholly on breaking the law to get custom, whereas beerhouses usually worked within the law, if not within the confines of bourgeois morality. There was a considerable difference between the centrality of some beerhouses and saloons to working-class neighbourhood sociability, accommodating audiences mixed in age and sex, and the secretive bogus club.[35]

viii. Publicans' Organisations

In his evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on the Licensing Laws of 1854, a Wandsworth JP, Robert Hutton, spoke of the relatively high status accorded to publicans. Keeping a public house, he said, 'is considered at present a privilege and advantage, and increase of power'. Publicans were prominent members of the community on account of the services which they provided, whether formally as in the case of their role in transport, or as foci of informal networks for news and information. Their professional sociability and the demands of working within a strict legal framework made them suitable candidates for organisation

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35. On the mixed nature of the clientele of some establishments, see Dare's description of free and easies and saloons, discussed below, p.306.

once they were threatened. Their social status meant that such an organisation could become a powerful pressure group.[36]

Leicester's Licensed Victuallers' Association was formed in 1840. The hosiery depression of the mid-1840s increased poor rates to such an extent that many members were in severe financial difficulties and the organisation collapsed, to be reformed in 1849.[37] The purpose of the association was later stated to be

> the protection of its members against vexatious information or prosecutions, to secure the full and free exercise of their business, to restrain and oppose all fresh exactions and restrictions, to apply to the legislature for the amelioration of such burdens as already press too heavily upon them, and generally for the furtherance of the interests of the trade.[38]

With few exceptions, most of the association's activities were undertaken in response to efforts to restrain the trade. It was a defensive body, most effective in protecting the monopolistic privileges of its members. At times, it attempted to act as a cartel, as when in 1885 a meeting resolved to raise the price of spirits in response to the budget.[39] The association grew fastest when under direct attack, in 1854-5, 1871-2 and 1892-5. Its most important functions were to provide solicitors and legal advice, to keep its members in contact with national organisations and campaigns, and to exert influence in local politics. But the sources distort the historian's view of the association, giving ample coverage

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36. PP 1854 XIV (346). On the status of publicans, see Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, ch. 1 and J.J. Rowley, 'Drink and the Public House in Nottingham, 1830-60' in Transactions of the Thoroton Society vol. LXXIX, 1975.

37. Era 1.9.50.

38. Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1877.

39. LC 16.5.85.

to its annual dinners and regular meetings, but paying less attention to less respectable practices such as the organisation of anti-temperance crowds.

Early meetings drew moderate numbers. 80 attended the annual meeting of 1851, and a 'tolerable muster' sat down to the anniversary dinner in 1853.[40] The events of 1854-55, with the threat of greater regulation of Sunday trading, led to 53 new members joining. The president, Waldram, was kept so busy with public meetings, lobbying Parliament and arguing with Thomas Cook that the association presented him with a silver cup as a mark of their appreciation.[41] The association affiliated to the United Towns Licensed Victuallers' Association, based in Birmingham (f.1854). Its representative, Joseph Stinton, told the 1854 Select Committee that in all the towns he represented, 'the publicans are strongly opposed to closing the Public Houses more than the law lays down at present'.[42] The victory which followed the Temperance Hall rally and Hyde Park riots in 1855 was celebrated by the Leicester Licensed Victuallers with an annual dinner of 'the utmost eclat', over 130 attending, in addition to women seated in the gallery for the first time and delegates from the United Towns and Birmingham Associations, a further innovation.[43]

The attendance of local dignitaries at annual dinners gives some indication of the standing of the association with the town's elite over the next 20 years, and reflects the movement of the trade's leadership

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40. LC 30.8.51; 27.8.53; There were 238 Licensed Victuallers in 1854.

41. LC 11.8.53; 28.7.53. On Thomas Cook, see below pp.247 passim.

42. PP 1854 XIV, qq.3702.

43. Crapster discusses the later development of national publicans' organisations, especially the Licensed Victuallers' National Defence Committee of England and Wales (1872) and National Defence League (1890-32). For the 1855 dinner, see LC 1.9.55.

to Toryism. The anti-Sabbatarianism of Joshuah Walmsley probably accounts for his attendance in 1856, together with the town's other MP, John Biggs, and Dr. Noble, who was to become Mayor in 1859. This was the high point in public recognition by the Liberal establishment, perhaps a conciliatory gesture after the events of 1855. Walmsley, as president of the National Sunday League, lost popularity and was defeated in the 1857 election, coming third behind the Temperance Liberal, Harris, and John Biggs. The split in the Liberal ranks in 1859 allowed a Conservative, Heygate, to achieve a respectable vote and to win a by-election in 1861. As an MP, Heygate was automatically invited to the Licensed Victuallers' dinner, but it was always a contact which he strove to cultivate. He continued to attend after losing his seat in 1868.[44] By the late 1860s, regrets were expressed about the absence of councillors and magistrates from dinners. In 1874, Councillor Fowler, previously solicitor to the association reflected that 'There had been times in the past history of that association when the mayor and magistrates had been present at their banquet'. Now the only councillors were those such as Fowler, Cleaver and Mott who had connections with the association or with the trade. In the place of Liberal worthies were Tory gentry from the county, Viscount Curzon, and Lord John Manners, and county MPs such as Pell and Clowes. Despite the no-politics rule, speakers reminded those present with increasing frankness who their friends were. Cleaver, commenting on Bruce's bill,

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44. On licensed victuallers' voting patterns, see John Vincent, Pollbooks (1968). Leicester is given prominence there as an example of an early swing of the trade to the Tory party due to the temperance sympathies of Liberal candidates after 1857. Leicester's election history is discussed in Victoria County History of Leicestershire IV. On Heygate's presence at licensed victuallers' gatherings, see LC 9.2.61. On Walmsley, see John Wigley, The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday (1980).

said that 'They always looked to the Conservatives as being more friendly than the Radical side of the house', and attention was drawn to the fact that the Leicester MP McArthur, had voted for Lawson's temperance bill in 1875, a fact which would be remembered at the next election.[45]

By 1875, publicans could not but be aware of the effectiveness of the association as a means of legal defence. Members were much more likely to escape conviction than others. Solicitors such as Baxby and Fowler, were active at the Brewster Sessions, discrediting poor information against their clients. By 1875, the association had 230 members, including 179 from the borough's c.280 licensed victuallers.[46]

Despite its ability to mobilise a substantial part of the trade, the domination of bench and council chamber by Liberals with no sympathy for their calling meant that the political effectiveness of the association was limited. Influence had to be exercised at ward level, and even there, inroads were being made into the trade's role in electioneering. The Conservatives in East St. Margaret's ward had long held their meetings in the Fox Hotel, Midland Hotel and Midland Arms, and the Chronicle commented in 1871 that 'The power of the beer-barrel is here undisputed'. But in 1874, the Liberals won, having eschewed the use of licensed premises in the campaign. The 1883 and 1884 Corrupt Practices Acts were to limit the use of pubs in elections further.[47]

The association as a body does not seem to have undertaken political campaigning until 1895 when the secretary, J.S. Brown, reported that

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45. LC 27.11.75; 16.11.72; 26.9.68; 21.11.74.

46. LC 27.11.75.

47. LC 4.4.74; 7.11.74.

> Your committee had for some time past contemplated taking action to secure representation on some or other of the various local governing bodies where they were not already represented.

As in Nottingham, there was a long tradition of representation on the Board of Guardians, where the licensed victuallers had an interest as ratepayers, and on vestries. Now they were to try for the school board and achieved some initial success.[48]

The Licensed Victuallers' Association sought to counter the disreputable image which the trade had acquired as a result of temperance propaganda. Much of it was special pleading, more effective in boosting their own confidence than in winning over opponents. Speakers at their meetings dwelt on the patriotism of publicans, toasting the Queen and the armed forces, and becoming more stridently imperialistic later in the century. Their service to the nation in paying taxes and licensing duties as well as billetting troops were at the same time upheld and resented as impositions. Licensed victuallers declared their aim of defending British liberties in the name of 'Justice, equity and freedom of conscience' against Czarism and class legislation. They resented what they portrayed as criminalisation and persecution by the police, despite their long record of collaboration with the bench.[49] Yet they were firmly against any move to free the trade and rejoiced in the 1869 Beerhouse Act. They tried to promote an image of skill and expertise, possessed by neither beerhousekeepers nor off-licenses, which meant that they, far from encouraging drunkenness, were those best able to control it.

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48. F.J. Gould fought elections against publicans in 1901 for the school board and in 1904 and 1908 for the council. F.J. Gould, The Life-story of a Humanist (1928).

49. LC 29.6.72; 28.7.55; 3.12.70.

The Licensed Victuallers were in a logically indefensible position. The claim to be able to control drunkenness was absurd, however strict some publicans may have been on their own premises. They were trying to defend a monopoly in the name of liberty and freedom, when all that was on their side was an unfashionable tradition. Attempts to promote the pub as an inn for the service of travellers or a provider of home comforts for working men did not convince its opponents, for whom the images of gin palace and music saloon remained dominant. The failure to co-operate with the Bench over licence reduction after 1902 suggests that publicans were unable to take innovative steps to alter their reputation. By strong legal protection and by avoiding conflict over such matters as music licenses and closing times, most established publicans in Leicester survived temperance attacks, and the decline of the number of beerhouses and the refusal of the bench to allow pub-building to keep pace with urban expansion increased their trade and the value of their property. The more difficult financial circumstances of the years immediately before the First World War may have been trying for the many Leicester publicans who were not supported by brewery finance.[50]

The Leicester Beerhousekeepers' Association was founded in 1866. By 1871 it had 112 members among c.200 beerhousekeepers in the town.[51] Its main aim was to seek parity with the licensed victuallers. The 1872 act was well received since it established a common closing time

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50. Duncan's Manual of British and Foreign Brewery Companies (1897) passim.

51. LJ 26.10.66; LC 28.2.71.

for all houses. Once that difference was abolished, the two societies grew closer together, and from 1874 representatives of the Beerhousekeepers' Association were invited to the Licensed Victuallers' dinner and meetings. This was welcomed by the former's secretary, Badham, as 'a source of gratification'. In 1880, they fielded a joint cricket team against Loughborough Licensed Victuallers and Beerhousekeepers. The two associations shared a common antipathy to off-licenses. Once pre-1869 beerhouses were brought under full magisterial control in the 1880s, the rationale for separate associations disappeared and a merger appears to have taken place.[52]

The Beerhousekeepers' Association achieved a certain respectability for its members after the persecution of the previous decades. Councillors attended its meetings and its solicitor, Owston, achieved good standing with the magistrates. Badham became secretary of the Beer and Wine Trade National Defence League in 1875 and the exchange of delegates from other towns suggests that beerhousekeepers, or at least their representatives, were not totally confined within the culture and horizons of poor back-street areas. The association was seen by some of its members as a route to better things, and several of the committee are among those repeatedly applying to the Brewster Sessions for full licenses in the 1870s, although to no avail.

In the 1890s, the trade was institutionally united in its resistance to new laws. Leeder, chairman of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, called the 1895 Local Veto Bill 'an unmixed blessing' since it had

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52. LC 21.11.74; 24.8.80.

'welded the hitherto scattered organisations of the trade into an impregnable whole'.[53] Now brewers' representatives, rather than political figures, were guests of honour at dinners. The trade was increasingly inward looking, concerned more than ever with commercial issues rather than cultural power.[54] But at no stage had trade organisations tried to defend the culture of the public house in its own terms, nor did they try to reform it. Convivial as individual public houses and landlords may have been, their organisations concealed behind bombastic rhetoric unmixed commercial self-interest.

## B. The Temperance Movement

The development of the trade and its defence organisations is only to be understood in the light of the sustained campaign of the temperance movement. Indeed, much of the evidence about drink was generated either by temperance sympathisers or in response to their accusations. It is for this reason that the bulk of the information in the previous section concerns the social pathology of drink. Leicester's temperance movement was a major force in shaping the institutions of popular culture in the 19th century, for even if large and influential groups in both the middle and working classes remained doubtful, even hostile, towards its methods, at least moderate, voluntarist temperance sentiment became the common currency of magistrates and socialists, churchmen and union leaders alike. But the municipal authorities'

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53. LC 17.8.95.

54. LC 28.12.95; 1.12.1900.

commitment to restriction of the drink trade was never as total as the temperance movement itself desired. The present section discusses the development of the movement, and seeks to explain the gap between its aspirations and its achievement.

i. The Origins of the Leicester Temperance Society

Throughout the period the Leicester Temperance Society served as the central organisation for the campaign against drink, providing the initiative for the founding of the Temperance Hall, organising regular meetings and visits from national and international figures, paying for solicitors at licensing sessions and full-time temperance advocates, and providing assistance to other temperance bodies which grew up in the town from the late 1850s. Increasing organisational diversity was identified by Thomas Cook during the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1886 as one of the most distinctive features of the movement in the second half of the century. By 1886, temperance had grown from the pursuit of an eccentric minority to a major force in local political and social life.

According to Cook, the Leicester Society was started in December 1836 after the second visit of the Birmingham blacksmith John Hockings, with 50 founder members. Unlike the sister society in Market Harborough, the early years were not plagued by any hostile mob; indifference was a greater problem than persecution. At first, things went well. The first bazaar was held in 1840 and Cook's first excursion, to Loughborough,

was run in 1841.[55] Influential members of the local community took the pledge, most notably the Rev. Thomas Babbington, President of the Society until his death in 1875, and the Quaker Edward Shipley Ellis, philanthropist, sometime mayor and director of the Midland Railway Company.[56] Early meetings were held in the Amphitheatre and the New Hall, and the Town Council made the Council Chamber available when not required for municipal use.[57] Tea meetings were sometimes held in Biggs's warehouse.

At the same time as it received such official and bourgeois encouragement, the movement was aided by the strength of temperance Chartism in Leicester. Thomas Cooper himself was a convinced teetotaller. Henry Vincent visited in March, 1841 and over 60, including Cooper, took the pledge. Efforts were made to prevent this becoming a divisive issue within Chartism, and Cooper was careful to ensure that the Temperance Section of the Leicester Chartist Association was not narrowly committed to Teetotalism. The existence of such a strand within Leicester's working-class radical movement is suggestive, given the strength of teetotalism in the ILP (eight out of nine ILP councillors were teetotallers in 1905). But while leading Liberal working men sympathised with temperance, if not with prohibitionist tendencies in the 1850s, working men's temperance in the 1870s and 1880s seem to have been dominated by professional agents from the Temperance Society.[58]

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55. Thomas Cook, Temperance Jubilee Celebrations at Leicester and Market Harborough 13th-18th November 1886 (Leicester 1886). On Cook's career, especially the development of railway excursions, see John Pudney, The Thomas Cook Story (1953) and John Myerscough, 'Thomas Cook' in J.F.C. Harrison, Eminently Victorian (1974).

56. I.S. Ellis, Records of Nineteenth-Century Leicester (1935).

57. LC 16.1.69; Cook op.cit.

58. MFP 2.1.75; LTC 20.1.82. LM 27.3.41; 3.4.41; 12.6.41. Thomas Cooper, The Life of Thomas Cooper, pp.164-5. Midland Counties Illuminator 17.4. & 24.4.1841. On ILP, see Lancaster op.cit., p.119.

During the period 1842-44 there was disagreement within the society over the state of local coffee houses, then far from reputable. It seems that by 1846 the Society was in a state of virtual collapse, and was revived only by the efforts of a Town Missionary, Ripley, and a visiting enthusiast, Mrs. Carlisle of Dublin. Under the latter's influence, a circle of middle-class women supporters, including Mrs. Thomas Corah, was formed to collect subscriptions for the society. The money raised was used to pay a missionary and a visitation was started within the town. Mrs. Carlisle herself visited the poorer quarters, addressing the girls' class of the Domestic Mission on Temperance.[59]

Table 4.4

Entertainments at the New Hall for Temperance Week, February 1850

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| Monday | Benefit evening for the hall. The Fraser family. |
| Tuesday | Joseph Livesey; Lecture on the Great Delusion with temperance melodies. |
| Wednesday | Fraser family, Addresses by Livesey and Crossley of Derby. |
| Thursday | Public meeting. Report on Temperance Hall project. Collection. |
| Friday | John Fraser. Lecture on the Philosophy of Total Abstinence. |
| Saturday | Addressed by members of Leicester Temperance Society. |

Source: Leicester Chronicle 23.2.50.

By the late 1840s, the Temperance Society had acquired the form and methods of a vice-presidential philanthropic institution. Joseph Dare drew attention to its beneficial effect on relations between the classes.[60] Its public meetings at this stage kept close to the central

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59. LC 24.9.55; LDM 1847.

60. LDM 1849: 'One of the best features of the society is that it calls into living co-operation individuals of all parties and social stations'.

temperance message. The range of entertainments and lectures on offer is suggested by those listed in Table 4.4 and represents a mixture of drawing-room entertainment, based on popular classical and sentimental songs, and temperance lectures by Livesey and others which were themselves part sermon, part dramatic monologue.[61] On other occasions there were addresses by working men with musical interludes. A Mutual Instruction Class was formed, meeting in the Town Hall. Regular tea meetings were becoming 'a great fact' in 1850 according to Dare, bringing men and women together for entertainment and reinforcing domestic virtues. Rail excursions continued to be a popular activity for members of the society, in particular the annual excursion to Babbington's rectory at Cossington. In 1851, 1,500 made the journey there, accompanied by Thomas Corah and Edward Shipley Ellis.[62]

Perhaps as a response to the scandalous nature of the coffee houses, and because of difficulties with the Mechanics' Institute over use of the New Hall, Cook and Corah launched a scheme in 1849 to build a Temperance Hall. Events such as the Six Popular Evenings helped raise funds, and the project dominated Temperance Society activities until 1853, when the opening of the hall marked the beginning of a new phase of temperance activity in the town.

ii. The Temperance Hall Company

Recalling the opening concert held at the Temperance Hall, Cook described how a member of a 'musical party' rolled a beer-barrel into

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61. On Livesey, see Harrison (1971), pp. 115-18.

62. LDM 1851.

the hall and, when beer from it splashed onto the wall, christened it 'The New Music Hall', 'by which illegal designation it was insultingly and pertinaciously attempted for years to divest it of its proper designation'.[63]

The incident is emblematic of a continuing contradiction between the hall's role as a centre for temperance culture and as Leicester's biggest hall for entertainment other than the Theatre and later music halls until the opening of the De Montfort Hall in 1913. The conflict had its origins in the fact that the hall was owned not by the Temperance Society but by the Temperance Hall Company. Although the Society was a shareholder in the hall, it was unable to raise the £8,000 which the hall cost to build, and the project was undertaken on a joint stock basis.[64] The policy of the hall's directors was influenced by commercial as well as temperance considerations, and they were willing to let it out for lectures, concerts and entertainments to various individuals and organisations, on occasions to the displeasure of Cook and other temperance advocates.

The Temperance Hall was opened on 19th September 1853. It was an impressive building with Italianate facade and lavishly decorated interior which Cook thought would rival gin palaces architecturally as well as in the superiority of its attractions. It had seating for 1,800 and could hold 3,000 when the seating was removed. The ground floor had a lecture theatre for 3-400, reading room, library, club rooms and committee rooms.[65]

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63. LC 23.1.69. Dare uses the term without implying criticism in LDM 1853, as does Read Modern Leicester (Leicester 1881).

64. LC 16.1.69; 12.2.53. Cook claimed that at the time of opening, 324 out of 590 shareholders and 9 out of 15 directors were teetotallers.

65. Cook in LC 24.9.53; 20.8.52; 5.6.52. Photographs of the interior of the hall are to be found in the Leicester Mercury's picture library.

The grandeur of the hall, the formal laying of the foundation stone in 1852, the opening ceremony and the rhetoric of those who spoke at it suggest that the project aimed at something more than the more comfortable accommodation of the Society's 2,000 members. It was an attempt by an alliance of manufacturers and temperance enthusiasts to dominate recreation and popular culture in the town. Counter-attractions were to be presented under the extensive roof and patronage which would help to confirm at a cultural level the structure of power within the town. In the absence of a single large bourgeois or aristocratic interest in the town, a joint stock venture provided the most viable means of doing this at a time when the town council's involvement in such matters was limited and controversial.[66] William Biggs, hosiery manufacturer, called it 'a temple dedicated to morality, utility and progress' while the mayor, Samuel How, hoped that 'many would probably be brought to that hall who now delighted in the sensualities to be found in the public houses'.[67]

At the inaugural ceremonies, attended by the Mayor, four other magistrates, four Church of England and four nonconformist ministers, eleven councillors and other leading citizens such as Corah and Ellis, the interests of Leicester's Liberal establishment were most clearly articulated. Speakers and press commentators dwelt on themes of reform, improvement, self-help, moral suasion and class-cooperation.

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66. See ch. 2.
67. LC 24.9.55.

Cook and others drew attention to the physical improvement brought about by the very erection of the building. Hickling's Square, which Cook remembered as 'the St. Giles of Leicester', was demolished to make way for it. The Chronicle's report of the plans observed that

> contrasting with the former aspect of the site on which it stands, [it] will constitute one of the most agreeable transformations which ever committed itself to the approval of the sanitary, architectural or moral reformer.

An editorial drew a contrast between the opening of the hall and that of the New Hall at the time of the reform agitation in 1830. While the latter was built in 'an era of political excitement bordering on revolution, the date of the erection of the Temperance Hall is a period of individual reform and tranquil amelioration'.[68] Between the two dates, not specifically mentioned but hardly absent from any reader's memory, was the Chartist agitation. The Temperance Hall was held up in speech after speech as offering a better means of working-class improvement. John Ellis, MP, stressed the role of working men in building up the Hall fund, something which he thought would teach them 'not only to respect themselves, but to respect'.[69] Samuel How contrasted the hall with the Mechanics' Institute, claiming that the former alone was 'formed by working men themselves'. E.S. Ellis combines the theme of cooperation with that of retrenchment when he observed that 'people had only to put their shoulders together, without the aid of any government grant or suchlike assistance, to accomplish all they want'.[70]

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68. LC 5.6.53; 20.3.52; 24.9.53.
69. LC 5.6.52.
70. LC 24.9.53.

Several speakers were keen to express a broader appeal than that of the temperance movement in its narrower sense. The Chronicle was uneasy about 'platform ranting' and 'lack of true liberality in opinion and sentiment' among Temperance advocates, but recognised that the movement had already done much good work, as evinced by the improved mores of the upper and middle classes. Councillor Burgess made explicit that the hall was not exclusively for temperance activities and Thomas Babbington, in a letter read to the assembly by E.S. Ellis, sought to promote a liberal approach to their mission, avoiding direct conflict with vested interests. He said that there were 366 licensed houses in the town but that

> it was not their business to go out of their way to oppose keepers of public houses; for if the people will take such drinks ... people would be found to sell them; and he thought those who took the drinks were more to blame than the public-house keepers. They must go to work by persuasion ...[71]

This was the early teetotalism of Livesey and Gough, both of whom spoke at functions associated with the building and opening of the hall, not that of Lees and the United Kingdom Alliance. Its liberalism was attuned to the views of the town's leaders - hence its usefulness to them - but it was a unity of spirit which was fragile.

The populism of speeches referring to working-class participation was paralleled in the arrangements made for the two main ceremonies. The stone-laying in 1852 had the marks of one of Cook's more spectacular promotions, with a site for 10,000 spectators, nine special trains, bands from Derby and Bolton as well as Leicester, and a new Temperance Society banner in blue silk. Unfortunately, rain reduced the size

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71. ibid.

of the crowd. Babbington was presented with a silver trowel paid for, it was said, by 1,800 penny subscriptions from working men. Nevertheless, it was the names of the company's directors which were inscribed on a brass plaque set into the wall of the building; popular participation took place within a hierarchical framework. There followed a procession through the town to the Cricket Ground in Wharf Street, where there were further speeches on temperance and a balloon ascent. The massed crowds, procession and balloon ascent between them represent an appeal at once to order, rationality and scientific progress, and to a feeling for display and excitement, to the crusading defiance of custom which characterised the early temperance movement. It was an appeal to enthusiasm as much as to reason, one which was ultimately at odds with the tone of rational recreation. At one of the opening lectures, a Mr. Ripley delivered a lecture on Maine Law, one of the earliest references to prohibition in Leicester, and a further element in the undermining of the unity of the temperance movement and the town's elite.

iii. The Sunday Closing Bill

The linked issues of Sunday trading and Sunday drinking revealed a powerful illiberal current in nonconformity and in the termperance movement. Brian Harrison has shown how, nationally, the conflict engendered by the 1855 Sunday trading act was resolved by a panicked withdrawal of the legislation after the Hyde Park riots in the summer of that year. In Leicester, popular opinion had already been voiced the previous February, in a manner which, like Hyde Park, demonstrated the limits to which legislative interference with popular culture could be pushed.

The events of that year were traumatic for the temperance movement in Leicester, and showed that there was a gap between the liberalism of the elite, sympathetic to moral suasion, and that of the temperance movement, eager for rapid, institutional change.

On 31st January, 1855, 26 people met to discuss how to stop the Sunday sale of alcohol in the town, including Cook, Ellis and the Temperance Society's agent, Winks. While Winks insisted that any such campaign would have to be distinct from the Temperance Society itself, the overlap of personnel must have made the distinction a fine one for outsiders. It was decided to petition the mayor for a public meeting. In the evening, over 1,000 assembled at the Temperance Hall to hear E. Grubb of Manchester speak about the Maine Law, with Cook in the chair, and a motion for prohibition was adopted. From the chair, Cook made for greater vehemence in the ensuing controversy by alleging that the licensed victuallers had refused to answer his challenge to public debate, but failed to read out a letter from the Licensed Victuallers' Society secretary, Waldram, setting out their point of view. Cook made matters worse the following week by accusing Waldram of hypocritically signing the Sunday closing petition, and by prophesying that 'a fearful time was about to arrive for Public Houses'.[72]

A public meeting to discuss Sunday closing was convened at the Temperance Hall by the mayor, the hosier Richard Harris, who took the chair. What ensued was unparalleled in the history of temperance in

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72. LC 3.2.55; 10.2.55; It turned out to be Waldram's son who had signed the petition. LC 17.3.55.

Leicester. The Chronicle reported that 'great excitement prevailed in the town' and that steps had been taken by publicans to organise opposition to the platform. Cook, looking back from a partisan standpoint, was more explicit:

> A circular was issued from the headquarters of the publican interest urging all landlords and beerhouse-keepers to prepare for the event, and requesting them to each bring at least eight persons to the meeting. The result of this effort on the part of publicans was to bring together such a collection of drunken men as were never before seen in any public building in Leicester ...

He added that the opposition forged tickets to gain entry into the hall. Hundreds had assembled outside the hall by 7pm, and by 7.15 there were over 1,000 inside. The time before the meeting started at 8 was used in making jokes at the expense of teetotallers. The back gallery was closed - in wise anticipation of objects being thrown at the platform - and only in the side galleries, where the ladies sat, were temperance supporters in a majority. Hundreds remained outside.[73]

The meeting was disorderly from the beginning. The Rev. John Wing of St. Mary's and John Ellis, who moved and seconded the resolution, were shouted down, and only the intervention of the working-class spokesman Buckly, could get Wing a hearing. When the Rev. William Hill was hissed and booed, Waldram appealed for fair play, but to little avail, and Harris dissolved the meeting, which then approved Waldram's suggestion that Councillor Thomas Moxon, who was not identified with the temperance cause, take the chair, having once guaranteed Burgess, a director, against any damage to the building. The former Chartist leader, John

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73. LC 24.2.55. Cook op.cit., p.38. Cook does not repeat an accusation he made at the time that the militia were induced to go to disrupt the meeting by the offer of a pint to each man , or that the publicans tried to bribe the police. LC 3\.3.55.

Markham, spoke to loud cheers, proposing a moral suasionist motion which he thought appropriate to a nonconformist town. At this point, the militant wing of nonconformity manifested itself in the form of a General Baptist Student, Freckleton, from the college in Spa Place. He occupied the table and refused to move until given a hearing. Moxon removed him by force. A later attempt to restore the meeting to its original purpose, by the ladies singing temperance songs, was shouted down. Soon afterwards, the meeting broke up, a motion that the Temperance Hotel (prop. T. Cook) should be licensed to sell drink, not having been put formally. The Chronicle commented that however moderate the Temperance Society may have been at first, it was now far from that.[74]

This was not the end of the matter, both sides holding further, separate meetings. Freckleton, at the Temperance Society's regular Saturday night meeting, said that the demonstration could only harm the trade, and that the society should unite firmly behind the demand for Maine Law. Cook rounded on the Chronicle, comparing it unfavourably with the Hull newspapers, which were sympathetic to the temperance cause. By comparison, the trade, in a meeting at the New Hall chaired by Waldram, was able to portray itself as a moderate force. The new law was likened to Czarist coercion, and Buckly claimed that the accusations of Sunday drunkenness, which had formed the subject of a statistically ill-founded dispute in the press between Waldram and John Ellis, were 'a libel on the peaceable and moral bearing of the inhabitants of Leicester'. Freckleton was much heckled, but Markham succeeded in getting him a

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74. LC 24.2.55.

hearing. When the vote was taken, accusations that double voting had occurred led to a request that all vote with both hands. This must have added to the humour of the occasion, as did the gift by a woman to Freckleton of 6d with which to buy himself a supper, presumably an ironic reminder of the popular view that teetotallers were undernourished.[75]

The Sunday Closing controversy destroyed any claim of the temperance party to constitute a vehicle for the domination of working-class culture in the town. It resulted in the humiliation of the mayor and its own leaders, associated the movement in the press with extremists like Freckleton and with the Maine Law, while demonstrably failing to rally mass support. Petitions were sent off on the day following the meeting, but one of Leicester's MPs, John Biggs, presented 15 petitions to Parliament against Sunday closing two months later.[76] The temperance movement had seriously overestimated its own strength while ignoring both the organisational resources of the Licensed Victuallers and the strength of working-class feeling on the issue. There were lessons to be learned by national government, but no heed was taken of such localised protests.

When the Sunday Closing Bill came before Parliament, the Chronicle's editorial approved of earlier closing (10pm) but said that the bill was 'exceedingly unpopular and offensive to the public' and especially to the working classes.[77] It reflected sympathy for limiting drinking, but not for prohibition. Thus the temperance movement remained a

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75. LC 3.3.55; 10.3.55.

76. LC 28.4.55; Cook op.cit.

77. LC 28.4.55.

force in the development of popular culture in Leicester, but a divisive one. Its direct assault on the trade had failed, and its hall was branded as the scene of its most ignominious defeat. There were further Sunday closing meetings, in 1863, 1869, 1870 and 1900. E.S. Ellis remarked in 1870 that they could now be confident that such meetings would no longer be broken up, but that reflects the security of the trade as much as the acceptance of the temperance movement. In so far as the temperance movement was effective at an institutional level, rather than in reforming individuals and providing them with an alternative set of leisure pursuits, it was indirect, operating through the activities of the police and the magistrates.

iv. The Temperance Hall after 1855

The later history of the Temperance Hall Company illustrates the difficulties of reconciling the moralistic intentions of its founders and the commercial principles according to which it was operated. It continued to serve as the centre of Temperance Society activities, including visits from touring lecturers such as Gough, General Neal Dow and General Cary, all of whom attracted crowds of over 1,000. But the project failed in its wider purpose, and although it was used for meetings by the Trades Council, the Secular Society and the ILP, such bodies as Friendly Societies were not brought in.[78] In effect,

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78. On the Temperance Hall Company, see LC 11.12.80. That the hall could be attractive to friendly society members is suggested by a report that in 1853, a newly formed society for journeymen tailors held a heated debate about where they should hold their meetings. Several refused to join if they were held in pubs, but according to the mover of the resolution to use the Temperance Hall, the objection was not from teetotallers but from regular drinkers who could not resist temptation if pubs were used. LC 5.11.53.

the hall became just another place for public meetings, differing from other establishments only in its exclusion of alcohol.

That the hall seemed to be departing from its original purpose was a source of unease to some of its promoters, and discussion of its use came into the open in 1869 when the lessee of the Theatre Royal, Windley, entered into controversy over the presentation of dramatic performances there without a licence. A petition had been presented to the Hall committee, signed by 120 of the professional and mercantile elite asking for it to be licensed so that a full range of dramatic performances could be given. This was refused. A shareholder, Henry Gill, expressed dismay at the decision, *and wrote to the press* that

> When the hall was first projected, I, in common with many other persons, equally anxious with myself to promote the erection of a room worthy of the town, and available to the public for al proper purposes, made sacrifices to attain that object. I, however, should have declined to take shares, if I had supposed it probable that in time the public convenience would come to be disregarded, and the use of the Hall restricted to suit the views of a portion of its owners.[79]

In the light of the statements made at the opening of the hall, this was disingenuous. Gill was unable to persuade the shareholders to reverse the directors' policy, although a music licence had eventually to be acquired under the 1884 Local Act. What was at stake was to expand the role of the hall as a venue for middle-class entertainment.

The directors, and particularly Cook, had their doubts about what was going on in the hall. Cook claimed that licensing the hall

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79. LC 2.1.69.

for theatricals would further reduce the directors' control over what was put on there. He was already affronted by

> the present frequent occupation of the Hall by sensational and comic singers and actors; by those who are turning to derogatory purposes a professed power over human passions and actions.[80]

Worse still were the cheap dances in the large hall which Cook claimed drew 'fron the causeways of the London Road and Granby Street the very scum of the promenades'. By resorting to nearby public houses, the dancers had subverted temperance principles, and were to be seen at one and two in the morning between pub and Hall on the street. Cook wrote to the press and complained to the Police but only at length managed to persuade the directors to stop publicly-advertised 6d dances and impose earlier hours on dancing classes and soirees. Cook's attitude to both dances and drawing-room entertainments may have been regarded as unduly puritanical, but it represents a fundamentalist strand within the temperance movement which seems to have been in danger of being lost in the later 1860s, but which was to be revived by the Gospel Temperance movement in the following decade.[81]

In the end the Temperance Hall shed most such unfortunate associations. It was much used for concerts such as Herbert Marshall's annual series, and became the principle centre not only for the Gospel Temperance movement, but for all religious campaigns of a town-wide nature (ie not confined to a particular congregation). Along with the Floral

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80. LC 16.1.69.

81. ibid. On links between revivalist religion and temperance, see pp.189ff. Cook was not opposed to all recreations, and was a keen supporter of music and a major contributor to the Temperance Hall organ fund. LC 14.2.80, Cook op.cit.

Hall, it was a leading venue for bazaars, for political and sporting organisations as well as temperance and religious groups. The Blue Ribbon Movement and the Wesleyan Methodist Town Mission provided regular occupation from the early 1880s until the war. By this time, the company seems to have had no particular objectives other than the provision of facilities for organisations of which it approved. By 1895, dividends had long been falling. Shortly after the war, the hall was converted into a cinema, known as the King's Hall and run as part of the Victory cinema chain.[82]

v. The Temperance Society after 1853

While it remained only a sectional interest, inviting criticism from the Liberal press as well as the organised licensed trade, the temperance movement in Leicester was able to develop national contacts while diversifying within the town itself. It broadened its social base to include active participation from artisan and lower middle-class elements. It sought with some success to influence the licensing justices, and some of its most prominent members were themselves magistrates and councillors.

Links between the Leicester Society and the National Temperance League were established in 1865 when, on National Temperance League initiative, a public meeting was held at the Temperance Hall at which the vice-president, John Taylor, explained the benefits of affiliation

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82. LC 10.10.85; 9.2.95. Wright's Directory of Leicester 1920.

largely a matter of attracting more proselytes. Sound institutional links were forged and in 1872, E.S. Ellis took the chair at the organisation's national conference.[83]

Diversification of the movement took place both within and beyond the auspices of the Temperance Society. There was considerable overlap of personnel between the Temperance Society and the local auxiliary of the United Kingdom Alliance, and non-UKA men such as Barfoot and Ellis officiated at UKA public meetings. The emergence of the UKA, which figures so prominently in Dingle's account of the temperance movement in the later 19th century, did not destroy the unity of temperance culture in Leicester. The major new departure was the Gospel Temperance movement.[83a]

Other bodies fitted more securely within the movement. Although reformed in 1876 a Church of England Temperance Society branch was said to have existed in the 1830s, before the Temperance Society itself, but observers generally remarked on the small number of clergy of any denomination present at temperance meetings until the later 1860s.[84] By 1885, the CETS had achieved full recognition within the church. The archdeacon presided over its meetings and 16 of 18 parishes in the archdeaconry had a branch. 1,106 of 1,537 adult members were teetotallers. There were in addition 11 Anglican Bands of Hope, and

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83. LC 28.1.65; 4.5.72; On the National Temperance League, see Harrison, (1971), pp. 83a. See above. pp. 191-5

84. LC 28.3.69; 3.5.62. Cook op.cit. Wright's Directory of Leicester 1904.

work was done by the police court mission in preaching temperance and obtaining pledges.[85]

The Leicester Band of Hope Union was formed in 1866. Dare reported lively activity, but was fearful that their social activities might give children a taste for 'more sensational recreation' and so lead them to 'the disgusting exhibitions of the beer-shop or low singing-saloon'.[86] There had been temperance work among children earlier than this though. The Temperance Society had its branch in 1854, possibly to be identified with one which had been started by the Leicester Domestic Mission in 1852, and which had moved to the Town Hall in 1853 due to its popularity.[87] The BHU's annual report of 1886 claimed 6,743 members in the town, and 4,547 more in the county, and describes a wide variety of recreational activities in addition to educational efforts and the publication of a local edition of the Union's journal Onward.[88]

The Independent Order of Grand Templars, a temperance friendly society, had opened five branches in the town by 1872, with two more in the process of formation, and had 600 members. It was represented on temperance platforms and delegations, and its ostentatious regalia and processions reflected the militant, self-assertive character which characterised the temperance movement for the remainder of the century, as well as reproducing the forms of friendly society ceremonial.[89]

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85. LC 31.10.85

86. LDM 1868 p.9. Leicester Band of Hope Union Annual Report 1885. On the development of the Band of Hope movement, see Lilian Lewis Shiman, 'The Band of Hope Movement: Respectable Recreation for Working Class Children' in Victorian Studies 1973.

87. LC 4.11.54. LDM 1852, 1853. The Leicester branch had to be restarted in 1880. LC 25.9.80.

88. Band of Hope Union Annual Report 1887.

89. LC 21.9.72.

Most influential of the town's new temperance organisations at a political level was the auxiliary of the United Kingdom Alliance. Following visits from 1853 onwards, the local branch was formed in 1857 with 110 members. By 1869, it could crowd the Temperance Hall for public meetings on the Permissive Bill, with no fear of recurrence of the 1855 debacle.[90] Members of the Liberal elite attended its meetings, acquiescing in its plans if they were not themselves prohibitionists. The Chronicle recognised its 'unmistakeable honesty of purpose' but preferred strict enforcement of present laws to the imposition of new ones. In 1871, the UKA organised open-air meetings in Infirmary Square and Humberstone Gate and 9-10,000 signatures were collected in support of Lawson's Bill. Such popular campaigning declined in the 1880s, since in 1885 the society's agent, Beckwith, called for greater vitality and practical work, a consequence of the lull in Parliamentary activity described by Dingle.[91]

Meanwhile the Temperance Society continued to broaden its own programme. The 44th annual report (1880) gives some idea of the range of activities, although emphasising special occasions rather than routine events. During the year, the Society presented Mr. and Mrs. Stanyon's Saturday evening amusements, winter popular concerts, Gough's farewell to Leicester, Christmas music and tea meetings, summer open-air meetings in various parts of the town, which were shared with the UKA and IOGT, and excursions. By 1895, there was also a cycle club.[92]

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90. LC 20.11.58; 20.3.69.

91. LC 20.3.69; 20.1.72. Dingle op.cit.

92. LC 25.9.80.

Enthusiasm for temperance campaigning occurred in waves. The society's efforts in petitioning magistrates were concentrated between 1869 and 1892 (see below). The society first lobbied the school board to introduce temperance textbooks into board schools in 1879, and the issue of temperance education recurred until Morant published an official Board of Education syllabus in 1909.[93] The society also continued to mount popular demonstrations. In 1872, Harrap, a solicitor and member of the committee, called for 'a crusade against drunkenness', and for the first time a series of meetings was held in chapels about the town in an effort to further enthusiasm for the cause at neighbourhood level. There was an awareness that growing population, and immigration in a time of prosperity, were posing new problems for the movement. One temperance advocate, Buckley, referred in 1872 to 'The increase of population and large influx of drinking men into our town - men whose habits are low and confirmed ...'. This justified the appointment of a second missionary.[94] The 'drinking men' were presumably shoe workers, many from Northamptonshire, and adherents of the riotous celebration of St. Crispin's Day.[95]

Stimulated by the example of the Gospel Temperance movement and by the hope of legislative action, the tone of the society had changed considerably by the last years of the 19th century. This is apparent in the spectacle of massed crowds gathering in the market

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93. Leicester School Board Minutes 19D59/VI/4;7.4.79; 15.12.79; 19D59/VI/7;1.6.1891; 20.7.1891. Education Committee Minutes 19D59/VII/30;27.1.1908; 19D59/VII/31;26.7.1909. Dorn op.cit., p.39.

94. LC 6.1.72; 21.9.72.

95. LDM 1861, 1862.

place in 1903 and 1904 in opposition to Tory licensing legislation, notably the compensation clauses. At the 64th annual meeting in 1900, the society's secretary spoke of the need to take up 'a more prominent and aggressive attitude, and of creating a more powerful and consolidated temperance sentiment in the town ...'. Four years later, the Citizen's Protest Meeting Committee which had organised the Market Place demonstration of October 1903 renamed itself the Leicester Temperance Vigilance Committee. A Leicestershire Temperance Union was said to be organising on similar lines.[96]

By 1900, the campaign against the drink trade was divided. The mid-century vision of a united temperance movement as the spearhead of a campaign to reform popular culture had been lost. The organised temperance cause had become strident in its demands and methods. Meanwhile, the magistrates saw the issue as one for the administration of the law, not a moral crusade, and were fully aware of the strength of vested interests with which they had to deal.

## vi. The Licensing Policy of the Leicester Magistrates

The principle of magisterial discretion over the licensing of alehouses was firmly established by Escott's Act of 1828 and remained fundamentally unchallenged until the formation of the Central Control Board by Lloyd George in 1915. The Beerhouse Act of 1830 threatened magisterial control, but beerhouses were brought under their aegis by acts of 1869 and 1880. The extent of magisterial powers remained undefined until 1904, and attitudes varied greatly from division to division

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96. LC 29.9.1900; 13.2.1904.

over such issues as the confiscation of licenses in areas where there were thought to be more than were needed. This issue was central to the case of Sharp v. Wakefield and to the Royal Commission of 1896-9. In addition to a certain discretion within national legislation, local magistrates could extend their powers through specific legislation incorporated in town improvement acts. In Leicester, the music licensing clause of the 1884 Local Act was to be of significance in restricting the activities of public houses.[97]

Complaints were frequently made by temperance supporters that benches were too sympathetic to the trade, despite the fact that magistrates with interests in the trade were barred from sitting at Brewster sessions. This disqualification in turn led the trade to complain that there was no corresponding bar to known temperance supporters. A lasting complaint of publicans' organisations was that the law allowed magistrates to go beyond discretion to partiality in its administration of the law. Indeed, licensing justices could go so far as to approach their own, limited form of local option, preventing the building of public houses in new areas and imposing limitations to trade on existing houses. But the bench's conflict with the trade was not necessarily a product of temperance sympathies alone. Other factors, some ideological, notably sabbatarianism, others more nakedly issues of public order, were also relevant. Nor is it a simple matter to determine how far magistrates acted from personal conviction or in response to the evidence presented by temperance organisation.

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97. On the licensing laws, see Sidney and Beatrice Webb, The History of Liquor Licensing in England, principally from 1700 to 1830 (1903). On Lloyd George's intervention, Derek Aldcroft, 'Control of the Liquor Trade in Great Britain, 1914-21' in W.H. Challoner and Barrie M. Ratcliffe (eds.), Trade and Transport (Manchester 1977). On Sharp v. Wakefield, see Dingle op.cit.

The history of licensing legislation in Leicester before the First World War may be divided into four phases, 1828-1869, 1869-72, 1892-1904 and 1904 onwards. The first phase aroused little interest in the press. Refusal to renew licenses was virtually unknown, and there was no attempt by the temperance movement to stop completely the granting of new ones. The Beerhouse Act of 1869 transformed the annual routine of the Brewster sessions into a ritual and a major set-piece in the temperance year. The Chronicle observed in that year that 'The proceedings appeared to excite much interest, in consequence of the increased powers of the magistrates ...'.[98] A large number of the Temperance Society committee attended the sessions in the Town Hall, together with a Manchester solicitor, Smith, hired to challenge applications. Memoranda were sent by the UKA, Band of Hope committee and the Temperance Society Committee, asking for any new licence applications to be refused and a reduction in the number of houses with bad reputations. Although the licensed victuallers were represented by their solicitor, Owston, the occasion was characterised by willingness on the part of the magistrates to caution publicans on the strength of any intelligence against them, without being critical of its source, and to adopt enthusiastically a position hostile to the trade. This is perhaps not surprising since the main voices were those of the mayor, John Baines, and E.S. Ellis, both of whom had institutional affiliations to the temperance movement. Partiality of another kind lay behind Baines's condemnation of the Old Horse, London Road, which was cautioned for permitting

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98. LC 28.8.69.

Sunday morning drinking and further disreputable activities due to the youth of some of its customers. The pub lay on the route between the town and the wealthy Stoneygate suburb where many of the town's elite, including Baines, lived.

Despite the bluster of the magistrates, the 1869 sessions were mild in their effect (see Table 4.5 ). There was a reluctance to take away existing licenses or to grant new spirit licenses, as before, but powers over existing beerhouses was limited and they could only be refused renewal under statutory conditions. It was necessary for the Town Clerk to remind the magistrates of this in one case where there was insufficient cause to object to an application for a beerhouse licence for a house on Freeman's Common, and Ellis was obliged to sign the certificate against his will.

Many of the features of the 1869 sessions were repeated in the years which followed, and the pattern of hearing petitions, sometimes with general comments from the bench, followed by enquiry into cases where there were objections to renewal and the new applications was standard until 1892. From 1871, cases in which there were objections were held over until Adjourned Sessions to give time for the preparation of cases.[99] Under Escourt's Act and later under Bruce's Act of 1872, appeal to Quarter Sessions was possible, but cases were few in Leicester.[100]

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99. LC 2.9.71. Under Escourt's Act, annual licensing or Brewster Sessions were held in August or September (except in Middlesex and Surrey), an arrangement which lasted until 1904 when the sessions were moved to February. In Leicester, music licenses were initially dealt with at special sessions, but once general principles were established and the number of cases fell, the business was dealt with at the Brewster sessions.

100. LC 22.11.70; LDP 21.10.93.

Table 4.5:

No. of Magistrates' Enquiries into Licences

| | old spirits | | new spirits | | all beerhouses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ref. | granted | ref. | granted | ref. | granted | Total |
| 1856 | - | 9 | 4 | - | sessions had | | 13 |
| 1863 | - | 11 | 3 | - | no authority | | 14 |
| 1869 | - | 15 | 10 | 1 | 7 | 17 | 40 |
| 1870 | 1 | 6 | 19 | 0 | nd | nd | 26 |
| 1871 | - | 10 | 2 | - | 10 | 3 | 25 |
| 1872 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 12 | 2 | 28 |
| 1873 | 3 | 11 | 12 | 3 | 10 | 5 | 44 |
| 1874 | 9 | 7 | 11 | 2 | - | 4 | 33 |
| 1875 | - | 3 | 18 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 30 |
| 1880 | - | 1 | 4 | - | nd | | 5 |
| 1886 | nd | | nd | | nd | | 5 |
| 1888 | nd | | nd | | nd | | 18 |
| 1895 | nd | | nd | | nd | | 4 |
| 1906 | 6 | 1 | nd | | nd | | 20 |
| 1913 | 5 | - | - | - | 2 | - | 7 |

Sources: LC, LP, LDP.

While concern to eliminate disorderly behaviour and to ensure that publicans were of good character ran through all sessions, other major concerns dominated the proceedings from time to time. These could reflect legislative changes, as in the case of changes in licensing hours, but also suggest an intention by magistrates, working closely with the police, to establish standards of conduct governing various aspects of pub culture. In 1869, most cautions concerned Sunday drinking, in 1872, prostitution. In 1873, the bench began to insist that houses give up by-occupations, such as milk-selling, ostensibly to reduce the excuses available for presence in pubs on Sunday mornings. In 1875, the principle was established that all structural changes were to be subject to magisterial consent.

The sessions between 1876 and 1883 were generally much briefer, as if the precedents established during the previous seven years served to dissuade hopeless applications. At this time, though, it became increasingly common for the magistrates to have to deal not just with pubs and racecourse booths but with new business ventures in which drink was a part of some wider project for the provision of leisure facilities. Such ventures threatened the efforts of the bench to separate drink selling from other activities. There were a number of such cases in the 1880s - the Belgrave Road ground (applications annually from 1880), the Clarendonia Festival (1888) and music halls applying for a licence under the 1884 act. In 1875 the magistrates had demonstrated their intentions by refusing to grant a 6-day licence to the new Rutland skating rink despite a supporting memorandum signed by three aldermen and 20 councillors. A similar restrictive attitude prevailed throughout the period up to the war, although such applications

for licenses for businesses always commanded less agrement among councillors than did applications for public house licenses.[101]

During the phase between 1869-92 the police took on an increasingly important role. After the first few sessions after 1869, challenges by Licensed Victuallers' Society solicitors discredited much of the Temperance Society's evidence against publicans, and their attempts to use paid informers were unfortunate. Petitions and memoranda were usually of a very general nature, and soon only objections based on police evidence were able to convince. The temperance cause benefitted from the systematic efforts of Police Chief Inspector Duns, who from 1883 until his retirement in 1893 prepared careful summaries of numbers of licensed premises and cases of drunkenness. On the basis of these and of his daily observations, Duns recommended various actions against the trade, most notably the music licensing clause of 1884. Duns also drew up for the licensing sessions a blacklist of publicans convicted during the year which effectively constituted the set of cases for possible refusal of renewal. These practices were continued by his successor, Lumley.[102]

On occasions during this phase, the paternalistic inclinations of the bench became explicit. Replying to a memorandum from a Town Missionary and 16 clergy calling for reduction in the number of licensed premises, George Stevenson said that

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101. LC 2.10.75. On licensing of the Belgrave Grounds, Aylestone ground and Leicester Fosse FC, see ch. 6.

102. LC 1.9.83; 29.8.95.

> the magistrates would give the most anxious consideration to every case that came before them, with a view to diminish any unnecessary temptation to individuals, or any needless increase in the liquor traffic.[103]

This formulation incorporated both suasionist and prohibitionist aims. As cases became more sharply contested though, such a statement could be thought to be outside the bench's authority. Councillors continued to introduce their own and others' petitions before the bench (Burgess, for example, opposed the skating rink licence in 1875) but they became more cautious about making general statements in favour of the temperance movement.

The same caution never troubled temperance advocates who were not on the bench. Year after year, petitions were presented, against music saloons, liquor vaults and off-licences, supported by Sunday School teachers, clergy, 'wives, mothers and daughters', members of temperance organisations of all kinds and members of the public, with signatures canvassed house to house or in the street. Supporting evidence came in the form of lengthy addresses from missionaries and clergy, statistics of drunkenness and results of surveys of the number of people going into pubs. In 1885, in order to demonstrate the need for reduction in a congested district, a drink map was presented by the Temperance Society.[104] The licensed victuallers tried to emulate this method of influencing the bench, petitioning in 1872 and 1873 for extended hours but without success.[105]

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103. LC 27.8.70.

104. This is now lost.

105. LC 30.8.72; 28.8.73. The bench's discretion over 11 or 12 o'clock closing under the 1872 act was abolished in 1874.

It is not certain what the effect of such campaigning was. It certainly took up a lot of time - the 1869 sessions lasted until 10.30pm. But by the 1870s, there can have been few magistrates who had not decided where they stood on the drink question. The general nature of most petitions lessened their effectiveness, so that they became theatrical preliminaries rather than an integral part of business. Once detailed police reports were available, the value of temperance submissions as sources of factual evidence was correspondingly less. In 1892 the Leicester Daily Mercury commented in an editorial on the decision no longer to accept general memoranda,

> For some years past ... it has been the custom for gentlemen connected with temperance organisations in the town to appear at the sessions with a memorandum showing the evils of the drink traffic, and the desirability of limiting ... the facilities for distributing intoxicating liquor in the borough. This practice has always been a somewhat questionable one, viewing the matter strictly from the legal standpoint, but it has done no particular harm. Nor can it be said that it has done any particular good. The deputations have spoken of the evils *of intemperance*, but the magistrates have evidence of that every day of their lives, and hardly need reminding of what is so self-evident.[106]

It is perhaps questionable just how aware magistrates were of the effects of drinking in poorer parts of the town at a time when there was a large degree of residential segregation.[107] By the 1880s, such memoranda and petitions were a means by which neighbourhoods could express their opinion about new public houses to the bench. The loss

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106. Leicester Daily Mercury 2.9.92.

107. Some magistrates and councillors from time to time made excursions into the town's pubs. Stretton (1878) and Thomas Wright (1893) both made such visits on a Saturday night, and in each case reported that pubs were well-conducted, reflecting favourably on the efficiency of policy and magistrates. LJ 11.10.78, LDP 18.2.93.

of this channel contributed to widespread protest against the bench's policy in 1895.[108]

Between 1892 and 1904, efforts were made to change the relationship between the bench and the temperance movement and the trade, but with only partial success. The need to speed up proceedings following the boundary extension of 1892 is not an explanation of all the changes which took place. Thomas (later Sir Thomas) Wright, mayor in 1887 and 1891 showed impatience with the restrictive licensing policy on a number of occasions, and his conduct of the 1892 sessions shows that he intended to restrict the influence of the temperance lobby. All evidence was henceforth to be taken under oath, and only evidence relating to individual cases was to be accepted. Wright stopped the Temperance Society's solicitor, Stanyon, from 'lapsing into a long statement' and reminded him that it was 'a court of law, and not a debating society'. By 1895, there were no temperance submissions at all.[109]

This proved to be unfortunate as the same sessions granted spirit licenses to public houses in three new areas, one of them as part of an arrangement with the Great Central Railway Co., who had previously had to buy up and demolish a public house in order to build their new main line. All three licenses were opposed by public protest, with open-air meetings, local ballots and finally a mass-meeting in the Market Place, prior to a petition to the Quarter Sessions.[110]

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108. LC 28.8.80; 20.10.80.

109. LC 1.9.92; 24.8.95.

110. The three locations were in Berners Street, Western Road and Gipsy Road. LC 31.8.95; 7.9.95; 14.9.95; 21.9.95. Occupational analysis of the inhabitants of Berners Street from directories suggests a large proportion of lower middle class inhabitants, a group for whom the pub represented a threat to a precarious respectability. (Table 4.6).

Speeches at the meetings dwelt on the theme of preserving respectability and quiet. James Holmes, chairman of the Berners Street meeting and secretary of the Hosiery Workers' Union said it was 'a question of respectability and morality', and expressed surprise that the licences had ever been granted. Another speaker, J. Hackett, used the well-established argument that brewers and magistrates never lived near pubs, and called for democratic licensing powers (ie Local Option). The Temperance Society's agent, Matson, who was obviously instrumental in getting up the protest, attributed the business to the inadequacy of visits by magistrates as a means of determining public feeling. He accused them of paying attention to the structural and environmental aspects of a site rather than the social and moral ones.

The Market Place rally in September 1895 was attended by several thousand people in contingents from each of the areas affected, led by brass bands. 'Well-known friends of the Temperance cause' stood on temporary platforms to address the crowd, councillor Wakely presiding and the hosiery workers' leader, Jabez Chaplin, as one of the speakers. He called drink 'a cause of shame, of crime and of poverty'. About ten per cent of the crowd was said to be hostile and shouted for an hour, without disrupting the meeting.There is a hint in the account of the rally that they were organised by the drink interest.[111]

As a result of the campaign, the Berners Street licence was refused, but the other two stood. The Berners Street site was opposite a school and consequently an easier target. The other two, and especially the Western Road site, which belonged to the railway company, were important to the bench's policy of exchanging old licences for new,

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111. LC 21.9.95.

Table 4.6:

Occupation of the Inhabitants of Berners Street in 1895.

| | |
|---|---|
| Managers (incl. Partners) | 9 |
| Clerks, travellers, accountants | 15 |
| shopkeepers | 12 |
| Clothing | 6 |
| building | 6 |
| boot repairs | 2 |
| TU official | 1 |
| Other employment | 6 |
| No employment stated | 12 |
| | 69 |

(Total houses in street c.150).

Source: Wright's Directory, 1895.

which was by this time the only means of getting a licence in a new area.[112] The outcome contrasts with a similar case in the Highfields area in 1880 when four new licences were refused following public meetings.[113]

If the bench was having difficulty in finding areas where new licences would go unchallenged, it was not much more successful in getting the cooperation of existing licensees in carrying out a policy of licence exchange to reduce congestion in the town centre. The model which some wished to follow was that of Birmingham, where from 1897 breweries and magistrates together had begun a major initiative in reforming the public house. A similar suggestion was made by Wood, chairman of the Brewster sessions in 1899, but he received a memorandum to the effect that the tied house system was much less common in Leicester than in Birmingham so that there was not the same scope for planning any change.[114] T.W. Everard, brewery director, pointed out to the annual Licensed Victuallers' dinner that Leicester had relatively few on-licences anyway, and that the bench's demand for a 3-1 surrender ratio was unreasonable. (Table 4.7). The Birmingham system was not

Table 4.7.

T.W. Everard's estimates of relative numbers of pubs in Leicester and Birmingham, in 1900.

| | Leicester (actual) | Leicester (if B'ham ratios of licences to population prevailed) |
|---|---|---|
| ON | 457 | 668 |
| OFF | 319 | 187 |
| Total | 776 | 855 |

(Everard's estimate may exclude wine licences)

112. PP 1896 XXXVII (271).

113. LC 28.8.80.

114. On Birmingham, see Crawford and Thorne op.cit. LC 8.9.1900.

popular elsewhere, although Leicester's opposition, arising in part from the independence of many of its licensed victuallers, was such as to bring it special mention in the County Brewers' Directory.[115] Part of this opposition to deals between breweries and the bench may have originated the magistrates' own resistance to the most modern form of carrying on the trade when they refused to license managed houses.

Perhaps as a response to this failure, the Bench began in 1901 to take the matter of reduction into its own hands. An application for a renewal of the licence of the Empire Music Hall, Wharf Street, brought an objection from the Temperance Society on grounds that it was not needed, in accordance with the precedent set in Sharp v. Wakefield. The bench's response was, rather than to deal with such cases piecemeal, to survey the whole Wharf Street area, with a view to a plan for reduction.[116] Had they done so, it would have been an experiment in local control of national significance, involving considerable litigation. As it was, the magistrates were overtaken by the 1902 Licensing Act which established the principle of compensation and brought to an end this phase of licensing activity.

The compensation clauses of the 1902 Act were used principally to reduce the number of old town-centre beerhouses. The amounts paid suggest that these were small houses, and not very profitable. This limited use of the act arose in part from the small sums of money

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115. Duncan's Manual, 1900. On relative numbers of houses, see Table 4.7.

116. LC 10.9.1901.

available for compensation. Any more radical approach had to wait for the Liberal licensing bill of 1908, which did not receive the Lords' assent.

Councillors were not united in welcoming the opportunity of greater municipal involvement in licence reduction, which could also take place as a result of the acquisition of licensed premises for street improvements. Councillor Yearby objected to the purchase of the Roebuck in the High Street for £16,000 for such a purpose, asserting that 'He was not going to be party to voting away thousands of pounds out of ratepayers' pockets to satisfy faddists'. But the motion to buy it was passed, confirming the views of another councillor, Sawday, that the members of the municipal authority were 'trustees of the people, to see that their money is wisely expended, and at the same time we are equally responsible for the morals of the people'.[117] Such cases of purchase for improvement were rare, but the licensing act of 1902 allowed the bench, with access to the compensation fund, to pursue the role of moral guardian with full legal sanction.

High taxation in the 1909 budget and the controls imposed on the trade during the First World War transformed the trade in Leicester as elsewhere. The decline in the number of cases of drunkenness (see Table 4.2) and the far lower level of temperance activity after the war reduced the importance of the Brewster sessions.[118]

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117. LDP 25.2.1903.

118. On the war, see F.P. Armitage, Leicester 1914-18 (Leicester 1933), pp.99-100. The closing time in Leicester was set at 9pm from 30.12.1914 whereas Nottingham and Northampton both had 11pm closing. This was the cause of much resentment and led to a protest rally by 9,000 members of the no. 1 branch of NUBSO.

During the 1870s at least, the licensing magistrates had followed a policy which was agreeable to the temperance movement. This is in part due to the overlap of personnel between the two, and a common interest in the control of working-class culture. But increasingly the strength of the licensed victuallers, and the growth of more highly capitalised forms of commercial leisure presented new problems of control which could not be solved without dissension, at times within the council. Attempts to co-opt the trade in planning its own reform failed, largely due to the structure of capital in local public houses, which left an unusually large number in the hands of owner-occupiers. The resolution of the conflict over drink in Leicester was brought about largely by forces arising outside the town's boundaries in the shape of national legislation. During the period in which magisterial power was relatively greatest, the Brewster Sessions were a significant arena for the exercise of authority over popular culture. Decisions made and implemented there helped shape a distinctive environment for the development of leisure institutions, one which was restrictive, encouraging the off-licence, which served a domestic leisure market, rather than pubs, music halls and sports grounds.

Chapter 5

Theatre and Music Hall

The legitimate stage and the music hall had markedly different trajectories in 19th century Leicester, although by the end of the century both had reached similar positions in relation to national touring circuits. By contrast, in the 1860s, both had relied on a greater degree of local control and distinct identity, embodied in the characters of managers and caterers respectively. By 1900, both had achieved a certain respectability in the eyes of the local bourgeoisie and magistrates which they had not enjoyed forty years previously. The history of these two forms of staged entertainment thus has considerable interest for the central themes of this thesis. They illustrate the changing nature of the market for leisure and the development of older commercial practices into those of the later 19th century. They show how local patterns of entertainment became modified by closer association with national circuits. In this chapter, it is intended to examine the organisational background of theatre and music hall, rather than their artistic content, and to consider the implications of changes in the economic and social contexts in which they sought commercial survival. Of particular relevance are the attitudes of the town (and county) elite, both as potential audience, and as members of local authority.[1]

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1. There is now an extensive literature concerning 19th century, much of its concerning production and dramatic writing. On the latter, a basic text with bibliography is Michael R. Booth, et.al., The Revels History of drama in English: Vol. VI 1750-1880 (1975), Michael R. Booth, Prefaces to English 19th century Theatre (1980) and English Melodrama (1965). For the social history of acting during the period, see Michael Baker, The Rise of the Victorian Actor (1978) and Michael R. Booth, 'Going on Stage in Victorian England' in Josef L. Altholz (ed.), The Mind and Art of Victorian England (Minneapolis 1976). Works

/cont'd...

A. Theatre

i. Proprietors

Leicester's tradition of professional theatre was continuous between 1750 and 1957, first in a building in the East Gates (1750-1800), then next to the Assembly Rooms in Hotel Street (1800-36) and from 1836 in the new Theatre Royal in Horsefair Street. Until the opening of the Royal Opera House, Silver Street, in 1877, the Theatre

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1. (cont'd). which concern themselves with the interaction of actors, managers and the popular audience are Clive Barker, 'A Theatre for the People' in K. Richards and P. Thomson (eds.), 19th Century British Theatre (1971) and 'The Audience of the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton', Theatre Quarterly, 1979; Michael R. Booth, 'East End and West End: Class and audience in Victorian London', Theatre Research International, vol. II no. 1, 1976 and Douglas A. Reid, 'Popular Theatre in Victorian Birmingham' in David Bradby, Louis James and Bernard Sharratt (eds.), Performance and Politics in Popular Drama (1980). On the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton see also Jeffrey James Higley, 'A study of some social, literary and dramatic aspects of the Victorian popular theatre, as illustrated by the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, 1843-70', University of London Ph.D., 1973. More traditional histories of individual theatres, concentrating principally on the careers of managers are Kathleen Barker, The Theatre Royal, Bristol 1766-1966 (1974) and 'The performing arts in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1840-70' in Walton and Walvin (eds.), op.cit, and Donald Roy, 'Theatre Royal, Hull; or, the Vanishing Circuit' in Richards and Thomson (eds.), op.cit. A previous study of the Theatre Royal, Leicester, largely from an architectural point of view, is Richard Leacroft, 'The Theatre Royal, Leicester 1836-1958', TLAHS XXXIV 1958. An earlier version of the first part of the present chapter is to be found in Jeremy Crump, 'Patronage, Pleasure and Profit; A Study of the Theatre Roya, Leicester, 1847-1900', Theatre Notebook XXXVIII No. 2, 1984.

The study of music hall has begun to assert its independence of older traditions of writing, dominated by reminiscence and anecdote. Such works as M. Willson Disher, Windkles and Champagne (1938) and G.J. Mellor, The Northern Music Hall (Gateshead 1970) are nevertheless valuable as source materials for the social historian. Central to the academic study of the halls are Peter Bailey, op.cit and 'Custom, Capital and Culture in the Victorian Music Hall' in Storch (ed), op.cit. Penny Summerfield, 'The Effingham Arms and the Empire: Deliberate Selection in the Evolution of Music Hall in London' in Yeo and Yeo (eds.), op.cit. deals with the relationship between the halls and local authorities. For another local study, see Robert Poole, Popular Leisure and Music Hall in 19th Century Bolton (Lancaster 1982). Studies of music hall in the North East have tended to concentrate on performers and their songs, eg, Robert Colls, The Colliers Rant (1977) and David Harker, 'The Making of Tyneside Concert Hall', Popular Music 1, 1981. For assessment of the meaning of music hall to its audience from two very different perspectives, see Colin MacInnes, Sweet Saturday Night (1967) and Stedman Jones

Royal was largely unchallenged by direct competition, although rival spectacles were provided at various times by travelling players, circuses, music halls and concert rooms throughout its existence.

Leicester's new theatre was built during the summer of 1836 by the county surveyor, William Parsons at a cost of £8,000. The building, in a simple classical style with Ionic facade, held between 1,200 and 1,300 people, 450 in the pit, 350 in boxes and 400-500 in the gallery. It did not prosper during its first decade, and when Parsons came to sell it in 1847, its future was by no means assured. No individual buyer could be found, but eventually a group was formed on the initiative of Thomas Moxon, later a Tory councillor, to buy the theatre and run it as a private company with shareholders.[2]

Robert Read jnr. stated that the new company paid £3,500 for the theatre, and raised capital by the sale of 160 shares of £25, but it is doubtful that this many were ever issued since later in 1847 a motion was passed limiting the number of 120, and in 1900 a dividend was paid on only 105 shares. As well as satisfying a desire to patronise the arts, shareholding had three benefits: dividends, free admission to most performances, and a vote in the South Leicestershire constituency. It seems that straightforward financial speculation was seldom an important motive. There was only one case of

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2. The chief source for the activities of the Theatre Company is the Directors' Minute Book (afterwards MB) in the LRO. See also company records, PRO BT41/354/2023 and Robert Read, op.cit., p.214ff. On theatre in the earlier part of the 19th century, see Temple Patterson, op.cit., p.13 passim.

ownership of more than four shares, and most held only two, the number necessary for the extra parliamentary vote. Even the generous dividends paid in 1868 and 1871-3 (10 per cent) represented an income of only £10 per annum to an owner of four shares.[3]

The shareholders' interests were represented by 12 directors, retiring in rotation every three years (though available for re-election). In practice, the directors' recommendations to the AGM of new board members was never challenged. In financially successful years, the directors rarely met and the manager was left to his own devices. Such years were few between 1847 and 1884. Usually a sub-committee of four or five met frequently to deal with the business of the company and to liaise with the manager. As the company undertook heavier financial responsibilities with Galer's reconstruction in 1873, the directors as a whole took a more detailed interest in its affairs and the sub-committee declined. Finally, the theatre was taken over by the West End theatre company of Milton Bode and Edward Compton in 1906.[4]

Analysis of lists of directors and shareholders with reference to directories and pollbooks throws further light on their motives (see Tables 5.1 -5.4). Among shareholders (Table 5.1) there is a slight decline between 1847 and 1860 of the number of manufacturers, but a marked decline in the number of hosiers who held shares. The

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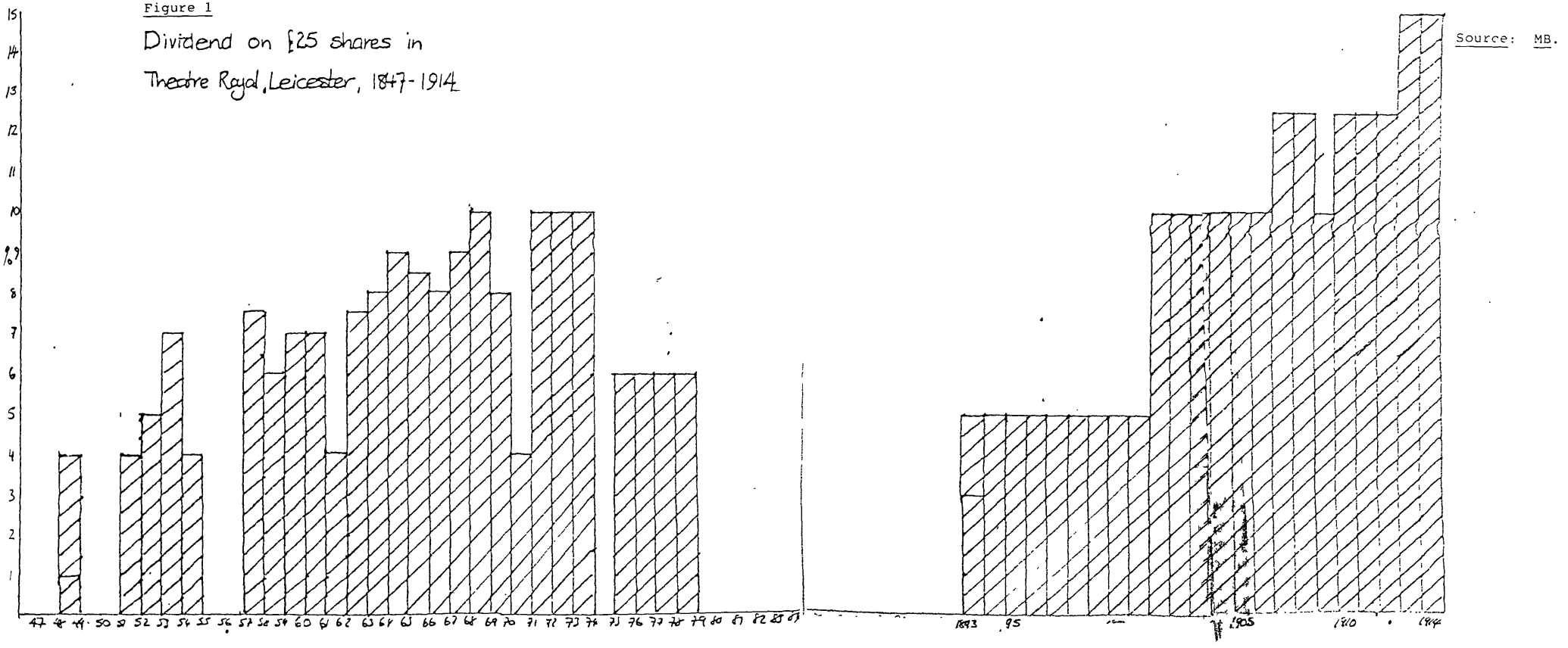
3. MB 16.4.47; Directors' Report 1900. Read, loc. cit. For dividends, see Figure 1.

4. LP 24.2.1900.

Figure 1

Dividend on £25 shares in Theatre Royal, Leicester, 1847-1914




Source: MB.

Table 5.1

Occupations of Shareholders of Theatre Royal

| | 1847 | | 1860 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Manufacturers | 12 | 24 | 7 | 20 |
| (hosiery manufacturers) | (8) | (17) | (5) | (14) |
| Merchants | 9 | 18 | 6 | 17 |
| Professionals | 7 | 14 | 5 | 14 |
| Wholesale and retail | 12 | 24 | 5 | 14 |
| (drink trade) | (7) | (14) | (1) | (3) |
| Clerks | 1 | 2 | - | - |
| Manual workers | - | - | - | - |
| Women | 2 | 4 | 3 | 9 |
| 'Gentlemen' | 3 | 6 | 4 | 12 |
| Miscellaneous | 3 | 6 | 2 | 6 |
| No occupation stated | - | - | 3 | 9 |
| TOTAL | 49 | 98 | 35 | 101 |

Source: PRO BT41/354/2023

biggest change is the decline in the proportion of drink sellers from 14 per cent to three per cent. At the same time, the proportion of professionals, merchants and retailers/wholesalers other than those in the drink trade remained fairly constant while there was a slight increase in the number of 'gentlemen' shareholders. The overall decline in the number of shareholders may reflect the failure of the company to establish the theatre's financial and moral standing on a higher level before the 1870s, but while the trend in the number of hosiers fits such a picture, the parallel trend among drinksellers does not lead to such a clear conclusion.

Among directors, for whom data is available over a longer period, the disappearance of men of private means, and the decline of the proportion of manufacturers and merchants after 1866 contrasts with the persistence of professionals and tradesmen. (Table 5.2). When the differing length of directorships is allowed for (Table 5.3) it

Table 5.2

Occupations of Theatre Royal Directors

| | First year of directorship | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1847-56 | | 1857-66 | | 1867-86 | | 1887-1902 | | Total | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Manufacturers | 7 | 22 | 1 | 7 | - | - | 3 | 27 | 11 | 15 |
| Merchants | 5 | 16 | - | - | 2 | 13 | - | - | 7 | 10 |
| Professionals | 4 | 13 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 27 | 4 | 36 | 13 | 18 |
| Wholesale and retail | 11 | 36 | 2 | 14 | 2 | 13 | 4 | 36 | 19 | 26 |
| (Licensed vict.) | (4) | (13) | - | - | - | - | (1) | (9) | (5) | (7) |
| Gentlemen | 1 | 3 | 7 | 50 | - | - | - | - | 8 | 11 |
| others | 1 | 3 | - | - | 2 | 13 | - | - | 3 | 4 |
| unknown | 3 | 9 | 3 | 21 | 5 | 33 | - | - | 11 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 32 | 101 | 14 | 99 | 15 | 99 | 11 | 99 | 72 | 99 |

Sources: MB, Directories.

Table 5.3

Average length of directorships
(excluding those still serving in 1901).

| | No. | Average (years) | Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| Manufacturers | 9 | 3.7 | 1-6 |
| Merchants | 7 | 10.9 | 3-28 |
| Professionals | 9 | 9.1 | 2-21 |
| Tradesmen | 11 | 9.9 | 2-30 |
| Licensed vict. | 4 | 4.8 | 2-11 |
| Gentlemen | 8 | 10.8 | 5-21 |
| TOTAL | 48 | 8.4 | 1-30 |

is clear that manufacturers played a relatively unimportant role, as did licensed victuallers. Apart from W. Agar's 28 years on the board, all directorships of 20 years or over were by gentlemen, professionals or tradesmen. Greater stability of the board after c.1880 when compared with the 1850s reflects the company's increasing financial stability.

Politically, shareholders and directors were overwhelmingly Tory voters, a striking fact given the Liberal domination of Leicester politics. (see Table 5.4). The pattern was broken only in the 1870 S. Leics. by-election when votes were equally divided between the Liberal T.T. Paget, a former director, and the representative of the Tory Rutland interest.

Table 5.4

Voting patterns of directors and shareholders

a. 1847 Leicester borough election.

| | Shareholders No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Walmesley (L) and Gardner (L) | 8 | 17 |
| Walmesley and Parker (C) | 2 | 4 |
| Parker only | 24 | 53 |
| Unpolled | 4 | 9 |
| Not registered | 7 | 16 |
| | 45 | 101 |

b. Directors

| | 1847 (bor.) | | 1852 (bor.) | | 1865 (bor.) | | 1870 (S.Leics) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Liberal s | 2 | 22 | 3 | 21 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 42 |
| Conservative | 6 | 67 | 8 | 57 | 7 | 58 | 5 | 42 |
| Unpolled | 1 | 11 | 2 | 14 | - | - | 1 | 8 |
| Not registered | - | - | 1 | 7 | 4 | 33 | 1 | 8 |
| TOTAL | 9 | 100 | 14 | 99 | 12 | 99 | 12 | 100 |

Sources: MB, Pollbooks.

These figures suggest that the owners of the Theatre Royal comprised chiefly the traditional county town bourgeoisie of professionals, shop keepers and fund holders who had lost municipal power in Leicester in 1835. Apart from William Biggs and Thomas Tertius Paget, neither of whom remained long on the board, the town's Liberal-nonconformist elite was not represented among the directors, and there were few more among shareholders. The statistics of ownership, together with the Theatre's association with the Dukes of Rutland, the Races, the Licensed Victuallers Association, the Yeomanry and the Militia suggest that, at least initially, it was intended by its directors to represent an urban culture based on more traditional social relations than those favoured by the manufacturing elite. The directors' attempts to enforce respectability on their managers can be seen as part of an effort to bring the middle classes, and county society, back into the theatre. The development of the theatre in Leicester needs to be understood with reference to a middle class differentiated by party, denomination and attitudes to recreation as well as to relations between classes.

ii. Managers

Leicester's theatre was run by actor-managers during much of the period, relying on various combinations of stock company, touring stars and, increasingly, touring companies. From the 1880s, though, they were directly responsible only for the pantomime, otherwise, functioning as business managers. While certain pressures were applied by the proprietors either in contracts or by exhortation, to limit artistic freedom, and while they could make life easier for favoured managers by more enthusiastic attendance, artistic policy originated

from the manager's talent and perception of the market. The directors' choice of a suitable manager was thus crucial for artistic and financial success, and the large number of failures witness to the difficult commercial circumstances of the town, a lack of professional knowledge on the part of the directors.

Few were willing to come to the aid of a bankrupt manager.

It is possible to identify four phases in the theatre's management, alternating success and failure before stability was finally established, as follows:

1. 1847-63. A period of unsuccessful experiment, during which only Charles Gill was able to establish himself for any length of time.
2. 1862-68. A prosperous period in which George Owen was able to achieve popular appeal. By the end of the decade, though, the directors were seriously concerned about the respectability of the drama in Leicester.
3. 1869-84. Thomas Windley and Eliot Galer sought to exploit the growing respectability of the theatre elsewhere and changing attitudes to leisure among the town's middle class. The opening of the Opera House in 1877 and the cost of redecorating the Theatre Royal in 1873 left Galer financially weakened and a series of failures followed his departure. The 1870s saw the decline of the stock company.
4. 1884-1914. The Theatre Royal found a stable role as a house for popular melodrama and sensation plays, leaving the more up-market comedy and operetta to the Opera House. From 1900,

the two were jointly managed. In 1906, the Theatre was taken over by the London-based theatre enterprise of Milton Bode and Edward Compton.

Central to the relationship between managers and proprietors was the negotiation of rent. Traditionally, the Theatre Royal season lasted from Race Week in September, when county society descended on the town, until the end of December. There was then a further season from Easter until Whit Week, including the May Pleasure fair. For the rest of the year the building was used for visiting minstrel and variety shows and public meetings. The short season presented further difficulties for managers and proprietors alike, and the latter used a number of strategies to increase the use of the building, letting billiard rooms and cellars separately on an annual basis. The clash of interests between managers seeking long leases, getting out-of-season weeks at effectively very little extra rent, and directors seeking to maximise returns by short leases in spring and summer, emerged openly on several occasions, and it is clear that the directors' policy was conducive neither to good business nor successful theatre. The experience of the 1850s led to longer leases. Lengthening the season followed from the growth of the potential audience as the town expanded, the development of the pantomime season, and the increasing availability of touring companies. By 1872, the season lasted virtually all year round, and its links with the traditional holiday calendar were declining. Bank Holidays, rather than the Race Week, were the most popular theatrical occasions.

The level of rent was set by negotiation between the directors and incumbent managers, or, when a new manager was being appointed,

by tender, the proprietors inviting offers through the pages of the local press, The Times or The Era. The more professional managers had a good idea of what the theatre was worth. In 1884, T.W. Ford of Watford exercised discretion in rejecting the asking price, writing that 'knowing the Theatre Royal, Leicester very well, terms will not suit'.[5] The theatre's reputation as a graveyard of actor-managers' hopes had gone before it. But not all applicants were so well informed, and overestimated their abilities to cover costs. J. Spencer Harris's offer in 1854 of £220 per annum for seven years may have appeared attractive to the directors, but the rapidity with which he failed suggests that they had been unwise to accept him. Following this incident, it was resolved in future only to let for one season at a time.[6] The effect of the resolution was to destabilise management further for the remainder of the 1850s, with no security of tenure and little incentive to invest in improvements to scenery or the auditorium. Only after 1884 did secure tenure become the rule.

In the light of the unhelpfulness of the proprietors and the difficulty of finding an audience, it is not surprising that George Owen was able to characterise the Theatre Royal in the 1850s as 'sunk into disgrace - desecrated by brawls - and managed by insolvent adventurers'. During that decade, Spencer Harris was only one among six failures. Nor did Owen's relative success or the investment of 1873-74 signal the end of such failures; there were three more between 1879 and 1882.[7]

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5. MB 9.7.84.

6. MB 26.2.55; 2.4.55; 26.4.55; 14 & 23.8.60.

7. MB 20.3.60; 26.1.54; 4.6.57; 8.11.57; 15.12.57; 24.5.79; 8.2.81; 6.7.82.

Most revealing of the directors' lack of commercial sense at this time, and of their wishful thinking about the ease with which the theatre could be reformed, was the acceptance of Jonathon Townsend as manager in 1859. Townsend was an auctioneer before going into politics and becoming MP for Greenwich in 1857, a seeming guarantee of respectability. Owing £2-3,000, he was forced to resign from Parliament, and turned to the theatre, partly to raise money, partly to carry out a personal crusade against the 'Blood and Murder' pieces which he thought responsible for the decline of the theatre. His opening programme consisted wholly of legitimate drama, yet despite critical acclaim and well patronised race nights, the 'complete revival' anticipated by the Leicester Journal did not arrive. An attempt at populism, with melodrama and low prices, also failed. The proprietors took the unusual step of granting Townsend a gratuity of £20 in consequence of his great losses. It is apparent that attempts to look outside a somewhat resented group of theatrical professionals led the directors to select people with little knowledge of the theatre-going public.[8]

But there were also managers who succeeded in establishing themselves more securely at the Theatre Royal. Charles Gill, its first manager after the formation of the company, survived until 1853, including some very bad years, by hard bargaining with the owners, cutting production costs, and by a willingness to appeal to a broad public with a varied programme and cheap admission.[9] Unlike any other manager, John Windley

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8. LJ 9.9.59; 30.9.59; 23.9.59; 4.11.59; 11.11.59; 2.3.60; 9.3.60. MB 18.2.58; 30.3.60. The grant to Townsend was challenged as to its legality by three directors, including King, but without success.

9. LJ 24.9.47 passim. MB 29.6.48; 14.6.49; 26.1.54. See also R.W. Waddington, 'Leicester's Theatrical past', LM 25.2.1938.

wrote his own account of the history of the theatre in Leicester in 'The Advances in the Provision of Higher Recreative Amusements for the People of Leicester during the Victorian Era', published in 1897. He took the opportunity to atribute great importance to his own role in that advance describing his return to his native town in 1868 as 'an important change in the theatrical history of the town'. He recalled that 'By stringent means to prevent disorder, and by the small, but not ineffectual step of raising the gallery admission to 4d I managed to evolve order out of chaos'. His other reforms included further raising the gallery price to 6d in 1871, the introduction of early doors, and the greater use of touring companies. His willingness to engage in controversy in the press and the courts to defend the reputation and monopoly of the theatre further evince his zeal.[10]

Yet while Windley's tenure was instrumental in a limited restoration of the respectability of the theatre, his improving rhetoric should not be accepted unquestioningly. In May 1869, the Leicester Chronicle commented on the contrast between the tragedy then offered and the 'sensational nonsense' usually performed. Apart from the absence of some of the most popular melodramas, Windley's programme was fairly miscellaneous, alongside Shakespeare and 'dramas' such as Ingomar, and the comedies of Roberts and Taylor, were the plays of Boucicault, equestrian plays including Mazeppa and Dick Turpin's Ride to York, and sporting dramas.

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10. T. Windley, 'The Advances in the Provision of Higher Recreative Amusements' in Leicester Commemorative Exhibition Catalogue (Leicester 1897). The step of raising prices was made under pressure from the company, vic., 'The manager has been urged to this step by the entreaty of many influential patrons, and by his own convictions that Leicester, in this respect, should not be behind towns of the same size and importance'. LJ 29.9.71. 3d was the gallery price in the East End, whereas in the West End it was 6d. Cf MB 6.6.71 when Windley was instructed by the directors to cease putting theatre bills on the walls and doors of the theatre.

In so far as there was a change of repertoire during the early 1870s, it was towards the new comedy rather than the old legitimate drama. Windley's own company, in common with many stock companies, was not up to the new style, and the Journal commented on a performance of Buckstone's Married Life in 1872 that 'the general playing of the whole piece undoubtedly proved that Mr. Windley's Co, does not understand comedy at all'.[11]

Despite his reputation, Windley was unsound financially, and was having difficulty meeting his payments by early 1871. The following year, he was failing badly, despite help from the company in coming to terms for paying off his debts. When the decision was taken to remodel the interior of the theatre in 1873, Windley's poor financial record precluded him from a further term. Moreover, Eliot Galer offered the reputation he had built up during a number of successful opera seasons in the town during the past ten years.[12]

Assessment of the importance of Windley's role is made all the more difficult by the paucity of information about the theatre in the later 1860s under George Owen's management. Since Owen avoided major financial difficulty, there is little material in the Directors' minutes from the period. At a time of growing competition from music halls and entertainments at the Temperance Hall, Owen seems to have achieved the modest success which was perhaps the best a provincial theatre director could hope for. In 1869, the rent was raised to £450 (Owen offered

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11. LJ 6.1.68; 5.5.69; 28.10.70; 10.11.71.

12. MB 15.2.71; 24.2.71; 14.6.71; 9.2.72; 27.2.72; 24.2.73.

£360), an indication of restored finances. Set against this are statements by Windley and others about the disreputability of the theatre in the late 1860s, and the silence of the local press, which contains very few reviews between 1866 and 1869. From The Era, there is evidence to support Windley's case, and there are reports of Owen, like Gill and others before him, forced to appeal from the stage for quiet from the Saturday night audience.[13]

Owen's success was based on the cultivation of a popular audience. Gallery prices were at 3d throughout the decade, and the programme was varied. A press notice in 1864, announced that

> Mr. G. Owen, in his managerial arrangements for the season, appears disposed to provide for his supporters a multitudinous variety of entertainments, including Shakespearian and legitimate dramas, sensational novelties, pieces of a merry and brilliant description and farces of which broad humour is the speciality.[14]

Owen's standards of performance were high. He was a celebrated tragedian, and built a reputation for Shakespeare during his earlier management in 1858. Mrs. Owen achieved a national reputation and became a favourite of the Leicester stage. By 1865, the directors were prepared to renew his tenancy for four years.

Windley's comments reflect : a worsening of some aspects of gallery behaviour at critical times in the week as low prices and improved wages made the theatre more readily accessible to a popular audience which included those intent on disruption, especially young members of the working class. It is also apparent that, having secured a four-year contract, Owen was more frequently absent, leaving the theatre in the hands of agents and subtenants.[15]

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13. Windley, op.cit.; MB 4.6.69; Era.
14. LJ 16.9.64.
15. eg in April 1866, Owen was in Dublin. LJ 6.4.66.

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that Leicester's poor economic condition before the 1860s made for permanent instability in theatre finances. Given the weakness of middle-class support, hard times deprived the theatre of a large part of its working-class dominated audience. Owen's success in the 1860s coincided with the disappearance of the 'hungry stockinger' and the rise of the shoe trade. Even so, depression did not inevitably mean disaster. The ability and trade knowledge needed to force down rent was a valuable asset, though perhaps more an indication of hardened professionalism than itself a key to survival. The willingness to lower prices was important in attracting a popular audience, and Windley's problems largely post-date the return to a 6d gallery. But there were cultural as well as economic factors to consider in attracting an audience. Leicester lacked the long association between manager, company and audience which was so important in East End theatres, but some managers and performers were able to build up a following, either among the press and proprietors or among the wider audience. Of these, the latter was more valuable for survival. Where local talent was not a sufficient draw, managers could still capitalise on the reputation of stars, and the successful managers made ample use of actors such as Anderson, Aldridge and Dillon. Above all, a poor company never made for a good season. The most ambitious programming, that of Townsend, seems to have been coupled with ineffective acting, and it is tempting to suggest that an inappropriate programme could just survive if well performed, but bad acting would be certain to fail. The success of Owen's management was due in part to good fortune, but also to the cultivation of a popular audience with low prices, a varied

repertoire, competent production and acting, popular leads, a strong Shakespearean tradition and pantomimes with striking effects. All in all, the Leicester theatre was not a place for the stage-struck or the would-be restorer of past traditions.[16]

iii. The Audience

There is little direct evidence of the social composition of the popular parts of the theatre audience. That from Birmingham and London suggests that it was overwhelmingly working class. Certainly the Leicester audience was greatly diminished during trade depressions and by rival popular attractions such as circuses and music halls. Pit and gallery were always fullest on Monday and Saturday evenings, the most usual times for working-class leisure, and on popular holidays.

According to Joseph Dare, a Unitarian domestic missionary, the inhabitants of the very poor areas of All Saints parish were in 1848 beyond the reach of rational recreations, including the legitimate drama, and 'consequently they rush to the monstrosities of the strolling player and the more horrid orgies of the back rooms of taverns'. Tom Barclay, who grew up in a comparable part of town, off Belgrave Gate, among the Irish poor in the 1860s, recalled that he never went to the pantomime as a child. Nevertheless, when he was employed as a cotton winder as a boy, he used to go to the theatre on pay-day for 3d, and names The Vampire's Bride as an example of what he saw. C.J. Billson describes

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16. In 1858, Owen was reported as being 'convinced that Leicester could and would support a theatre, and he continually hoped that the trade of Leicester would revive so as to enable them to follow the bent of their inclinations'. LJ 21.5.58.

a sweep called Kelley with an enthusiasm for Shakespeare who occupied a seat in the front row of the gallery whenever the Bard's works were performed, but the only other evidence of the occupations and status of working-class theatregoers is that performances were patronised by the Oddfellows in 1861 and the Elastic Weavers' Benefit Society in 1869. The impression given is that while the poorest sections of the working class might at times be unable to afford the theatre, both casual and organised sections of that class were represented among the audience.[18]

By 1870, a noticeable part of the audience was young. Children in arms were forbidden admission after 1861, but there were many youths present. Large numbers of these were unsupervised and became the subject of the complaints of the respectable to the press. One father regretted having taken his two sons to a performance during which he was 'speedily disgusted with the language which issued from the mouths of the gallery boys, who, not content with stomping and pelting, hurled applies at the heads of the playgoers ...'. Windley replied that he thought it unreasonable for the writer to have expected much else on a Saturday evening, which was a rowdy occasion in all theatres.[19]

Much of the noise which arose from the audience was a direct response to what was happening on stage. Applause and laughter were of course welcome in their place, but the Journal regretted the enthusiasm shown for the performance of Mr. Marshall, a comic singer, in 1862,

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18. LDM 1848; Barclay, op.cit; C.J. Billson, Leicester Memoirs (Leicester 1924), p.112. LJ 1.11.61; 5.5.69.

19. LJ 27.12.61; 24.1.68; 9.12.70; 16.12.70.

whose 'vocal performances produced unbounded applause, and not infrequently double encores. This is too bad, and we hope that in future the occupants of the gallery will have more consideration for their favourite'. Performances of Shakespeare, notably Hamlet and Macbeth were punctuated with applause in critical places, and the finest passages of Richard III were encored on one occasion. But audience response was not always so positive, and the crowd had a keen sense of what was value for money. An uncommitted performance of Il Trovatore by Galer's visiting opera company in 1859 which played to virtually empty boxes, met with loud criticism from the pittites. On another occasion, disapproval of a political nature was shown towards The Spirit of the Loom, a play about handloom weavers.[20]

The dissatisfaction of the gallery was all the greater when physical conditions there became unpleasant due to overcrowding. Very popular plays were sometimes disturbed, as when the Corsican Brothers played to a full house in 1858. Confusion in the gallery meant that at times the play was inaudible to anyone in the theatre.[21]

The last real brawl reported in the Leicester theatre occurred in 1841. At a performance of King Lear, with Charles Dillon, there were 'disgusting oaths', several fights and coats and hats flung into the pit.[22] Later disturbances by large numbers were of a rather different kind, either confined to the gallery boys or lacking malicious intent. When a stone bottle was thrown from the gallery at the orchestra pit in 1848, on the Monday of Fair Week, the manger, Gill, offered the reward

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20. LJ 5.11.52; 23.9.59; 14.10.59; 18.3.59; 4.11.53. For descriptions of the divisions within the popular audience, see Thomas Wright, 'Working Men's Saturdays' in his Some Habits and Customs of the Working Class (1867).

21. LJ 3.12.58; 3.12.69.

22. LC 2.10.41; LJ 13.10.48.

of a guinea for the person informing on the offender. The latter was promptly handed over to an attendant policeman and later fined. After the 1841 incident there seems to have been little toleration of violence directed at persons. Gill was much troubled by general noise, and made appeals against it on several occasions. In 1851, he gave end-of-season advice to the gods, 'wishing them to leave the talking to the performers, by which means they would be more gratified and edified than by taking so large a share of it themselves ...'. Gill's remarks were probably aimed at the practice of running commentary and witty interjection in the performance, which provided the audience with additional enjoyment. By the 1860s, it was felt by one observer that this wit had degenerated into obscenity. H.J. Davis, addressing the Literary and Philosophical Society on the subject of the decline of the legitimate drama said he would 'enjoy nothing better than to hear some of those passages of wit which used to pass between the gallery people in old time ... But in their time, alas! gallery wit had turned to personal abuse, and its humour to obscenity ...'.[23]

By the late 1870s, standards of behaviour were changing. Removal of the forestage and the greater social distance between the actors of the touring companies and the audience reduced the number of interventions. Irving's Hamlet of 1878 was still attended by applause for soliloquies. The Chronicle complained that 'Both gallery and pit are given to applauding mere sentiment without reference to the playing, as if they were listening to stump oratory'. Such conduct typefied the Bank Holiday audience

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23. LJ 17.1.51; 4.12.63.

at the end of the century who 'hissed the villain, laughed at the comic man and applauded the heroic sentiment to the echo ...'.[24] Like melodrama itself, the behaviour of the popular audience was becoming stylised to such an extent that there was little room for individuality; by the standards of mid-century, it was a sham form of audience participation, in which the gallery played a part directed from the stage.

By the time the new company was formed, Leicester's theatre had long ceased to be fashionable. After the 1790s, only those belonging to the less strict denominations patronised the theatre. This excluded large parts of Leicester's bourgeoisie, and corresponded to some extent with the political division within the town. Those who did attend the theatre from the middle class were for the most part linked to the Tory interest dominant in the county and opposed by proponents of municipal reform and rational recreation. Patronage by these people, whether as proprietors or sponsors of bespoke performances for the Licensed Victuallers, Freemasons or cricketers, was necessary in this 'metropolis of nonconformity' to establish the respectability of the theatre.[25]

The theatre was part of the annual round of county society in the first half of the century, and Race Week included a fashionable night when the boxes were filled. But by 1853, the boxes could be described as a 'forlorn hope'. In 1859, the 'galaxy of beauty and fashion' which inhabited the dress circle was only a nostalgic memory. The Dukes of

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24. LDP 17.4.1900.

25. Temple Patterson, op.cit., p.13; LJ 14.11.51: 'We stated last week that a Conservative night is on the tapis; we hear it is not decidedly fixed ... This reminds us of the good old times when the party was wont to meet together on such occasions'.

Rutland do not seem to have attended between 1858 and 1868, and gala evenings for the Yeomanry, militia and troops stationed at Glen Parva barracks were fewer in number. Changes in the county's calendar and a withdrawal of county influence from the town worked against the old connection with the theatre, as did the changing nature of the Races from a society occasion to a popular regional sporting fixture.[26]

The bulk of Leicester's middle class would have found much to object to in the theatre. The behaviour of the noisier sections of the gallery constituted a moral and political affront. The prospect of sitting under the gaze of their Tory opponents in their role as patrons and proprietors cannot have been attractive either. The drama itself was not considered suitable entertainment in the 1850s. The press blamed poor selection of plays, but in reality the problem was more deep-seated.[27]

During the 1860s attitudes began to change. George Stevenson, son of a Baptist minister and mayor of Leicester in 1869, addressed the Literary and Philosophical Society on 'the legitimate drama' in 1864 and upheld the potential of the theatre as a medium for enjoyment and instruction. If it did not always seem wholesome, the drama was in need of pruning rather than eradication. For the time being though, the middle class would not patronise the theatre because 'the conscience of heads of families will not allow them to expose their wives and daughters

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26. LJ 24.9.47; 20.9.50; 9.9.59; MB 14.8.60; 28.8.60; 1.7.61.

27. 'If managers wish to raise the drama in public opinion ... they will do well to avoid those pieces which are neither to be valued for their language nor anything else, and turn their attention to the production of pieces of a more legitimate class'. LJ 31.10.56.

to the risk of being insulted and ashamed by some disgusting equivoque in the play or jostled by the scum that eddies around the entrance of the theatres'. Nevertheless, the interest in play-reading could form the basis of a revival of the legitimate drama, Stevenson thought. In 1878, a Unitarian minister, the Rev. J. Page Hopps went so far as to encourage the respectable to make the theatre their own rather than leaving it to 'bad people with low tastes'.[28]

As time went on, the number of quasi-theatrical entertainments grew and from them emerged the impetus behind the Opera House scheme. But the issue was not so simple for the theatre's management. Leicester's middle class already had access to music, recitations and opera at the Temperance Hall, and had begun to go to West End theatres.[29] Windley hoped to win them over to the Theatre Royal by improving it through redecoration, higher prices and a different repertoire, while carrying out a polemic against the Temperance Hall in the press. Windley was proud to announce the patronage of the Duke of Rutland and T.T. Paget, and he enticed back other gentry, including the Earl and Countess of Stamford and Earl Howe. But he had less success with the urban hierarchy. Despite a promising start, Galer encountered much the same difficulty after 1873, and explained at the opening of the Opera House in 1877 that although the Theatre Royal had improved, there were still many who would not go there for 'conscientious reasons' and that a new building, with no associations was required.[30]

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28. George Stevenson, The Legitimate Drama (Leicester 1864). LC 23.2.78.

29. LC 20.9.73. A correspondent, apparently a clerk, tells of being forbidden to go to the Theatre Royal in the 1850s by his employer. Shortly afterwards he saw the latter going to the circus. He also mentioned an acquaintance whom he met in a London theatre who would not go to see the same play in Leicester.

30. LJ 29.5.68; 23.12.70; 2.1.72; 26.4.72; LC 8.9.77.

Again, the opening was auspicious. The Chronicle reported that the 'gentry of the town' were anxious to be present. Yet by 1879, the same old complaints of empty boxes were to be heard.[31] In the end, the Opera House established itself with programmes of touring companies, performing operetta, comedy and occasional grand opera, with pantomime and melodrama during the holidays, but the hoped-for revival of the theatre as a hub of civic identity was never achieved - easy access to the West End proved too much for that. Nor did the theatre become the potent means of moral improvement which its advocates claimed it could be. Instead, it was increasingly integrated into an entertainment industry, eventually owned by people from outside Leicester. It did, however, become profitable, largely as a result of growing population and working-class incomes. At both theatres, the stable touring companies were safe financially and morally, except for occasional risque pieces such as Pink Dominoes. The new drama of Ibsen and Shaw was seldom performed on the Leicester stage before 1914, and the theatre was hardly a centre for fin-de-siecle bohemianism.

The Theatre Royal remained the resort of a largely working-class audience before the First World War, though with significant lower-middle class support. If Michael Booth's statement that 'By 1880 the middle-class conquest of the theatre auditorium and consequently of the drama itself was complate ...'[32] has any validity for the Leicester stage, as opposed to the West End, it is in terms of ownership, management

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31. Read described the Opera House as 'beyond the requirements of Leicester in 1882. Op.cit., p.217.

32. Booth in Booth et.al., p.21.

and policing, not the composition of the audience. The conquest was consolidated by commercial strategies rather than the improving aims of earlier patrons. The working-class audience had not been wholly drawn away by music halls, but it had been coerced into good behaviour.

B. Music Hall

i. Popular Music in Leicester to 1860

Prior to the worst of the depression of the 1840s, the town supported a thriving musical life, extending beyond the gentry who patronised subscription concerts. A choral society was founded in 1826, and the Mechanics Institute established a choir in 1837. William Gardiner, a leading figure in local concert life and an advocate of the music of Beethoven from the 1790s, taught instrumental and vocal music to people of all classes. Both formal ventures collapsed in 1840-41.[33]

Alongside popular enthusiasm for 'high' musical culture were public house entertainments of a less rational kind. In 1869, a blind fiddler unsuccessfully brought an action against a man who, during a dance at the Green Man, was pushed over by a woman and fell on the fiddle. This report supports a recollection by the temperance advocate, William Stanyon, who in 1900 remembered how in the 1830s his family had lived next door but one to a public house where at holiday time,

> the working-men and well-known bad girls began early in the day dancing to the fiddle, and as they were poisoned and bemuddled with drink, they dropped away by twos and more, openly into a yard devoted exclusively for brothels.[34]

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33. Temple Patterson, op.cit., p.13ff. William Gardiner, op.cit., vol. II, p.85.

34. LC 1.5.69; LJ 22.6.32; LG 29.5.1900.

The early music hall of the 1860s seems to have drawn on both the self-improving interest in concert music and on the hedonism of public house entertainments. During the 1850s, the former received renewed institutional expression. In 1853, the bandleader Henry Nicholson announced the first of a series of promenade concerts on the Wharf Street cricket ground. Four years later, a former member of Nicholson's band, Herr Ptacek, undertook open-air concerts on behalf of the middle-class Public Music Committee. The press reported that 'the bands are attended by increasing numbers, and evidently afford rational enjoyment to people of all classes'.[35]

At this time, Samuel Cleaver, later a councillor, Poor Law Guardian, President of the Licensed Victuallers Defence League and local representative for Bass, became landlord of the Rainbow and Dove. The pub achieved a reputation as 'the most celebrated of all rooms for classical music established in the town'. Members of all classes were said to have attended. In the late 1850s, too, such factory-based paternalism as there was in Leicester encouraged brass band music. George Stevenson, a Liberal councillor, told the Literary and Philosophical Society in 1862 that 'Factory bands ... have supplanted many low habits and created a means of recreation and a taste for classical music'. Band contests were first held on the cricket ground in 1857.[36]

In 1853, the opening of the Temperance Hall shareholders included prominent teetotallers such as Thomas Cook and Radical provided Leicester with its first major concert hall.

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35. LC 28.3.53; 20.6.57.

36. Robert Read, op.cit. Cleaver's obituary is in LDP 1.7.92. Stevenson op.cit., 1862.

During the 1850s and 1860s, it was used for drawing room and operatic entertainments, concerts by touring artists such as Jenny Lind, and 6d 'hops' on Monday nights.[37] The Temperance Hall became a respectable alternative to the music halls, presenting negro entertainments and operatic selections in a drink-free environment. It is likely that in the 1890s, the tastes which it had fostered were accommodated by variety theatres. Meanwhile, in the late 1850s, public house entertainments found increasingly elaborate settings, some providing purpose-built saloons.

Thus by the early 1860s, popular music entertainments were flourishing. In September 1862, the circus clown Dan Cook returned to Leicester and re-opened Stevens's wooden circus building, at the Fleur-de-Lis Belgrave Gate, as a concert hall. With an acting manager, company of 14 and performances by visiting favourites such as Mr. and Mrs. Howard Paul, this venture, known as the Alhambra Music Hall represents the relatively late beginning of music hall proper in Leicester. The Leicester Journal noted that

> The demand for this kind of entertainment is still a growing one, and seems to satisfy a certain class of person who, although not caring to visit a theatre, are desirous of witnessing an entertainment akin to it. Leicester has yet has been without an amusement of this character ...

By early November, low prices (gallery 2d) were bringing in packed audiences, but there was an abrupt falling-off and termination of the season at the end of the month, probably due to seasonal unemployment in the hosiery

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37 LJ 12.12.62.

trade. Apart from a brief Christmas season, Cook did not carry on with music hall promotion.[38]

ii. Paul's and the Gaiety[39]

The era of music hall, as opposed to variety theatre, extended in Leicester from 1862 until the late 1880s. During that time, it was dominated by two halls located in the densely-populated working-class district less than half a mile north of the town centre in Belgrave Gate and Wharf Street respectively. In contrast to what came after, they were the principal ventures of their promoters, and while there was never any question but that programmes would rely on touring professionals, caterers were able to respond sentively to local demand. There were instances of resident performers, usually singers, who worked a hall for a continuous period of several years.

Cooper's Music Hall, later Sweeney's, the Gaiety and the Gladstone (after Gladstone Street) was located on a street corner in Wharf Street. Plans for extension were soon underway. When Samuel Sweeney reopened it as the New Oxford Music Hall in 1864 (everybody called it Sweeney's) it had new galleries and a refurbished stage. At the time of its sale by auction in 1885, the pub and hall had a wholesale wine and spirits department, smokeroom, concert hall with gallery and two bars, seating

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38. The Era 18.8.61; 1.9.61; 29.12.61; 19.9.62; LJ 19.9.62.

39. The architectural history of Leicester music halls is only touched upon here, where it is informative of the changing nature of music halls as cultural institutions. A full study of the architecture, with reconstructed perspective drawings, is currently being prepared by Richard Leacroft for publication by Leicestershire Libraries. References to music hall plans may be found in the bibliography.

over 500, There were grounds behind the hall which could accommodate 3,000 for dancing, foot racing, circuses and promenade concerts.[40]

Dancing was a major attraction at first. Sweeney discontinued it soon after taking over. In 1866, his licence was held over by the Brewster Sessions while the conduct of the hall was scrutinised. Sweeney told the magistrates that dancing on the green had been discontinued two years previously. Dancing was deplored by moralists as encouraging the mixing of young people of both sexes. Joseph Dare, a Unitarian missionary, complained in 1862 that

> Necessary amusements are rendered demoralising by promiscuous gatherings of the young and neglected, by the vicious excitement of the tavern dance, by the morbid exhibitions of the circus, and the disgusting orgies of the viler "bal masque".

Ending dancing did not put an end to 'promiscuous gatherings' at Sweeney's. In 1865, The Era reported that the hall was

> crowded every Saturday and Monday, and often inconveniently so, for young people of both sexes do not always observe such strict order as a more moderate attendance commands ...

Sweeney made considerable efforts to reform the hall and establish it as an orderly house. He told magistrates in 1866 that at one point he had closed for seven weeks in order to rid himself of 'bad characters', that unaccompanied girls were not admitted and that those under 17 had to be accompanied by an adult. Nevertheless, the hall kept a down-market character. Sam Torr, a Nottingham-born comedian who had been successful on the London stage, and who was the man who managed the freakshow career

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40. The Era 31.5.63; 22.11.63; 12.7.63; 20.11.64; LC 9.5.84.

of the Elephant Man, took the hall in 1882, but left after only three years. Torr was popular in the town but failed to prosper at the Gaiety. According to a biographical article in The Music Hall in 1889, 'business was not so good as anticipated after a while, and it became evident that the town did not contain enough of the class he catered for to support Mr. Torr'. Prices were reduced after Torr left, attracting a large working-class audience.[41]

Survival in the 1890s required competition with the variety theatres. An old hall like the Gladstone would have fallen foul of municipal safety laws introduced after the Exeter Theatre disaster of 1887. In 1894, the hall was rebuilt as the Empire. By 1901 it was in the hands of the official receiver, and in 1903 was relicensed as a public house. Its owner had been offered £5,000 for his licence in 1901, such was the attraction of a licence in a city-centre property to asset-strippers who would hope to exchange it for a new licence in the suburbs.[42]

Opening at the Prince of Wales in Belgrave Gate in 1863, Paul's Theatre of Varieties remained in the family of William Paul until 1888. Paul himself (1821-1882) achieved more consistent financial success than did the Gladstone. Paul came to fit the model of the caterer as local popular dignitary, as established by Morton in London. He gave benefit performances for the lunatic asylum, the aged poor and in 1875 for striking elastic web weavers. Paul's claimed sufficient local press attention to suggest that it had relatively high status in the town as a whole.[43]

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41. The Era 7.6.63; LJ 31.8.66; LDM 1862. 1863. The Era 27.8.65; 7.8.85; The Music Hall 23.2.89; LJ 3.10.90.
42. G.J. Mellor, The Northern Music Hall (Gateshead 1970). LG 12.1.1901; 5.10.1901; 7.2.1903.
43. The Era 5.3.65; 31.1.75; 2.8.63.

Paul's catered for a largely working-class audience. In 1863, The Era admitted that

> From its distance from the heart of the town, the Hall has scarcely gained that amount of patronage among the better classes which it will certainly have as it becomes widely known.

It does not appear that it was to do so, although there was little doubt that the audience was orderly. At the 1866 Brewster Sessions, it was asserted by Ellis that 'the reputation of the house was very bad'. Paul was able to withstand this accusation, and Ellis was unable to give any specific examples of bad behaviour. At the hearing, Paul outlined the rules of the hall, which show the mangement anxious to impose strict order on the proceedings. None were admitted who showed signs of 'being in liquor' and no 'rude or boisterous behaviour' was tolerated. No unaccompanied girls were allowed in, nor was anybody under 20. The scale of charges was in line with Sweeney's, and cheaper than the Theatre Royal. Discipline extended to the stage as well; professionals were 'not allowed to sing anything on the stage tending to immorality'.[44]

The programmes at Paul's were initially very varied. Joseph Dare, who visited the hall in 1865, said that the performances consisted of 3/6 negro entertainments, 2/6 comic and 1/6 sentimental, an unusually high proportion of blackface acts. But this was not all that Paul provided. The house soprano, Mme. Bosanneck, gave selections of classical pieces. Spectacles such as Pepper's ghost and a mechanical display of the siege of Sebastopol ran for some time, and there was a tableau of the Death of Nelson and a ballet, 'The Village in Uproar'. In 1868, Paul put on a Can-can ballet, much to Dare's dismay.[45]

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44. ibid.,1.11.63; LJ 31.8.66.

45. LDM 1865, 1868. The Era 8.1.65; 2.4.65; 26.3.65; 21.5.65; 16.10.68.

Paul's and the Gladstone always had a chairman, and for much of the time Paul himself served in this capacity. On one occasion, he told the young Vesta Tilley, appearing in boy's clothes, to leave the stage and not return until properly dressed. Dare estimated that there were 600 in the hall on the Friday night when he visited and, despite two extensions, it was always crowded on Saturdays and Mondays. At the time of its sale in 1888, the hall had seating for 800, a proscenium stage measuring 37' x 24', four dressing rooms and two bars.[46]

Some indication of Paul's domineering managerial style, and also of the early links of his hall with the London music hall world, is obtained from a report of a court case involving the proprietor and a pair of comic duettists, William and Caroline Horbury, in 1868. Paul's agent had engaged the Horburys, who were also evidently acquainted with the Birmingham proprietor George Day, in London, suggesting a sophisticated level of organisation in a provincial hall even at this relatively early stage in its career. The contrast between locally-owned halls and later circuits such as Steel's is consequently diminished, at least in terms of the geographical origins of some of the acts.[47]

When William Paul was ill in the mid-1870s, his family found the business of running the hall burdensome, and tried to sell up in 1875. The property was withdrawn from sale at £3,200 though, and William Paul senior returned to management later in the year. The business

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46. LDM 1865; Era 27.6.75; LC 19.5.88; Lady de Frece (Vesta Tilley), Recollections of Vesta Tilley (1934).

47. 'Behind the Scenes at a Music Hall', LC 20.6.68.

continued to prosper until his death by choking on a piece of tripe in November 1882. By that time Paul was living with his son in the prosperous suburb of Belgrave. The funeral marked Paul's status in the working-class community. Thousands watched the cortege and many of the shops in Belgrave Gate closed.[48]

On the death of William Paul junior in 1888, the hall was sold by auction to A.F. Lovejoy of the Peckham Music Hall for £6,100. Considerable alterations were needed to meet safety regulations, but destruction by fire the following year saved Lovejoy the expense. In August 1890, a new building in renaissance style, known as the Prince of Wales's Theatre of Varieties, was opened at a cost of £10,000, accommodating 1,260 people. The passing of Paul's marks the end of the phase in which local capital alone was sufficient to sustain a business in the highly competitive music hall industry. Lovejoy, mobilising London capital, was able to meet fire regulations and build a hall capable of exploiting more fully popular demand for variety.[49]

iii. Free and Easies and the local act of 1884

In his annual report for 1882-3, Leicester's Chief Constable, Duns, noted that musical entertainments in pubs were greatly increasing in number, and that there was no law to control them. He asked for, and in 1884 received, a clause concerning music licensing in the local act of that year. By 1885, pub music halls had been virtually abolished

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48. The Era 7.3.75; 21.3.75; 27.6.75. LC 10.3.77; LJ 24.11.82.

49. LC 9.6.88; LJ 8.8.90; LDP 5.8.90.

in Leicester, leaving only Paul's and the Gaiety, alongside concert halls of a different character. The act institutionalised the monopolising tendencies inherent in the industry in the late 19th century. Such acts enhanced the value of music hall property and forced halls to operate as high-pressure commercial organisations, fairly openly dedicated to the maximisation of profit.[50]

By the 1880s, there were a number of pub music halls, such as Noble's Magazine Palace of Varieties, Illsley's Varieties and the White Swan which employed professional acts. Although smaller than Paul's, these purpose-built saloons represented considerable investments in the industry.

At the same time, less formal pub entertainments flourished. The Leicester Town Crier observed in 1882 that public house music was 'one of the methods which is being largely adopted to bolster up the falling off in the liquor trade ...', adding that 'What would be inadmissible in a music hall is the "correct card" here ...'. All over the town, it claimed, 'Pianos are being hammered, where pianos were never hammered before ...' and parents took their children to such free and easies.[51]

Such entertainments had a long pedigree. Tom Barclay recalled the attraction of drink to adolescents, such as he had been in the 1860s and '70s, and how 'we went to the "Free and Easy" and heard "Old Mother Glum" sung, and "After the Opera's Over" and "Not for Joe" and "It's Naughty but it's Nice". He reckoned that there were about a dozen of them in the 1880s.

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50. LC 1.9.83; CM 42:9.10.83. CM1/19:30.10.83, 22.1.84. LC 22.11.84.

51. F.J. Gould, History of the Leicester Secular Society (Leicester 1900), p.41. LTC 6.1.82; 11.2.82; 17.2.82. The Era 2.4.65; 9.4.65; 10.1.64. LC 22.11.84.

Joseph Dare had a less enthusiastic view of such activity in the 1870s, and thought the lure of Free and Easies, in back rooms of pubs, was partly responsible for the failure of many working class girls to develop domestic skills. 'These rooms', he reported, 'are filled with boys and girls, the boys are smoking and the girls are drinking ... Here they learn songs of a very low order'. As usual, Monday and Saturday evenings were the most popular nights, although some pubs held musical evenings more frequently.[52]

The free and easy was to have few public supporters in 1884. The solicitor representing the Licensed Victuallers' Society and the Beerhouse Keepers' Association asked the bench to lay down a general principle which would avoid establishing a new monopoly in music licenses. Most licensees, he claimed, didn't want music anyway, especially given the declining tone of popular songs. The magistrates accepted the views of the organised parts of the trade. 53 pubs were licensed for informal music in semi-private rooms, and casual performances on the piano were not objected to. But 34 applications were refused, including all those for music and dancing licenses (ie music hall licenses). In future, this type of entertainment was to survive only in working men's clubs. Few landlords dared risk loss of their licence by challenging the law in practice.[53]

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52. Barclay op.cit., pp. 16ff. Barclay adds that 'My scientific studies did not prevent me from having a few drinks of beer and whisky, and from singing in pubs and at "Free and Easies", songs silly and humorous, such as "Judy Callaghan", "Flannigan's Ball", "The Bad Militiaman", "Kitty of Coleraine", "I'm not myself at all", "The Whistling Thief" and "Molly Carew"'., ibid., p.43. LDM 1864.

53. LC 22.11.84; 14.2.88; 17.6.98.

iv. Palaces of Variety

The companies which took over Leicester's halls in the 1890s were not successful financially, and quickly succombed to competition from the Stoll and MacNaghten chains in the following decade. The Prince of Wales failed within a year of opening. By 1894, it was in the hands of a Captain Orr Gray, who ran it as the Tivoli Theatre of Varieties until Stoll's competition proved too great in 1900. In 1901, MacNaghten bought it, along with the Lincoln Empire and Gaiety Palace, Nottingham, to add to his chain.[54]

In 1899, Oswald Stoll bought the Floral Hall. The theatre architect, Frank Matcham, incorporated it into the structure of a massive new Palace Theatre of Varieties which was opened with a cast led by Charles Coburn in June 1901. The description of the building given in the shareholders' prospectus indicates how far this exceeded its rivals. The three-tiered auditorium seated over 3,000 with separate entrances and exits permitting rapid change of audience necessary under the twice-nightly system. There was to be no drinking in the auditorium so that it would be a place where 'the respectable man can take his wife and family without risk of contamination'.

There were nevertheless ample refreshment facilities, with restaurant, buffet, cafe and billiard saloon, as well as bars on each floor. Matcham, who was involved in seven other theatre building and reconstruction projects in 1900 and 1901, was employed by Stoll specifically for his ability to create buildings giving a high degree of safety, comfort

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54. Mellor, op.cit., p.179.

and good ventilation, rigid but unobtrusive class division and an environment which allowed variety theatres to extend their audiences among people who would earlier have regarded music halls with abhorrence.

At the Palace, Stoll was able to present the full range of stars who toured on his circuit. The biograph was introduced at the opening performance and remained an important part of the programme. In the last years before the First World War, there were an increasing number of reviews. Acting and music wholly edged out the circus element which was still in evidence in 1901, and even comedians were, according to the Leicester Daily Post, less prominent. The character of the entertainments was well summed-up in January 1910 when the Leicester Daily Post observed that

> There were many people at the Palace last night who were glad to escape the stress and turmoil of a political election and enjoy a programme of mirth, song and music.[56]

Both the Palace and the Pavilion (as the MacNaghten Hall later became) lasted into the interwar period, although forced to become cinemas. The Pavilion was demolished in a road widening scheme in 1929 and the Palace was bulldozed in 1959.

## v. The Audience

Moralists were quick to deplore the youth of many music hall-goers, and Barclay's account confirms the popularity of the form with

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56. LDP 31.5.1910; 10.5.1910; 6.1.14; 11.1.1910.

adolescents. Dare was appalled by the mixing of the sexes there, but his 1865 account of a Friday night at Paul's suggests that we should not be misled by this stress on the more lurid aspects of the dangers of seduction and prostitution to overlook the truly heterogeneous nature of the crowd. Dare observed a large audience, of all classes, from sweaters in shoe-finishing to professional gentlemen. The age range was wide, from 16 - 70, with many mothers nursing children. Dare did not see this as a way to control youthful excesses, though, and deplored the degeneracy of home life which the sight of a whole family out together implied. Prominent among the crowd were shoe-hands employed by firms which paid on Friday. In a later report, Dare noted that the most objectionable characters were youths in the casual parts of the shoe trade who enjoyed a brief prosperity in good times, unburdened as they were by a family. These, he said, 'assume either a flashy exterior, or shirk about in slovenly attire. They throng the low dancing, or music halls, and fill our public promenades with obscenity'.[57]

By comparison with the theatre in the 1860s, the good order at Paul's is striking. The presence of the chairman was partly responsible, and the performance conventions of music halls permitted more direct manipulation of the audience. The latter were not just spectators, and their enthusiasm could find more creative expression than the catcall, witticism or missile. The music halls, for all their cultivation of respectability, were free from the aristocratic and artistic pretensions of the theatre which invited the ridicule of alienated sections of the

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57, LDM 1865, 1868.

audience. There is no hint in the sources of a group of gallery roughs intent on rowdyism in the music halls.

In the early 20th century, audiences were socially more mixed, and even women could respectably attend. Peter Bailey has suggested that one of the attractions of variety theatre to the middle class was that it enabled them to enjoy the frisson of association with low life without risking personal contact, 'proximity without promiscuity'. The 'Darkest England' theme was played upon by a journalist, Arthur Stevens, in 1900, who disguised himself in cloth cap, old overcoat and bristles to spend 'A Night with the Gods in the Empire', as his report was headed. He found the crowd attentive, the songs decent. There was much smoking and many drinks were ordered. Stevens sat next to a man who told him

> I never misses a Friday night at a 'all, and haven't done these 15 years. I gets paid on a Friday, and I allus reckons a tanner for amusement, threepence to come in and the other for two drinks when I gets out ...

He preferred to attend the second house, since the first left him with too much time for drinking after it. It is also evident that the gallery was a place for eating fish and chips or pigs trotters during the performance.[58]

In common with the East End audiences, who gave Marie Lloyd the bird when she performed some of the more risque material she had used in the West End, the Leicester audience was thought to have rejected licentiousness. The Leicester Guardian observed in 1901 that

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58. LG 8.12.1900. Evidence of a Mrs. Barrows of Wharf Street, collected in the 1970s, is quoted in Gent, op.cit., pp. 44-5.

> One of the most encouraging features about the audiences who flock to the Palace is the fact that they almost invariably appreciate the best things best. When some hard-voiced "comedienne" sings a meaningless song with many smirks and a little dancing, she rarely gets many hands to applaud her, but let a really good vocalist sing a really good song and applause breaks forth spontaneously from every part of the building.[59]

It is reasonable to conclude that during the period under discussion, changes in the structure of ownership, in the music hall profession, in local legislation, in the economic situation of Leicester's working class, and in the temper of popular culture, made for a fundamental shift in the production of popular music and in the way in which it was received, from a vigorous culture more securely based in the local community in the 1880s, to the developed showbusiness of the 1900s. Nevertheless, it is necessary to guard against exaggerating this distinction. Paul was already hiring London-based artists in the 1860s while his rebuilt concert hall of 1876 shared many of the features of later variety theatres, including a formal stage, with procenium arch, no formal seat of honour for the chairman, and no tables on which the audience could stand their drinks. Conversely, some managers of variety theatres could, through deployment of patronage of local charities and letting of the theatre for benefits and rallies, win some, though by no means all, of the local prestige of a caterer such as Paul. But they were not local men, and it would be inconceivable that they should receive such respect as Paul was accorded at the time of his funeral in 1884. Formal continuities should not obscure the very real break represented by the decline of local ownership of the halls.

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59. H. Chance Newton, Idols of the Halls (1928) (1975 ed.). LG 10.8.1901.

In the 1860s, the new halls were seen by theatre managers in Leicester as an unwelcome source of competition at a time when they were already confronted by the difficulties of maintaining audiences. By the end of the century, Theatre Royal, Opera House and the variety theatres had reached a state of coexistence, promoting distinct genres of stage entertainment, unadventurous but profitable, as they were to remain until the coming of talking pictures at the end of the 1920s. It is plausible to argue that the growth of music hall made the task of improving theatre managers easier, as they drew off elements in the audience who, whether or not they were potentially disruptive in their refusal to accept the passive role increasingly allotted the theatre audience, had discouraged the middle class from attending. Yet in the longer term, the most striking feature of theatre and music hall in Leicester is their formal convergence, so that by the first decade of the 20th century, audience conventions and the conditions in which performances were to be viewed were broadly similar. While the class composition of audiences presumably varied, the difference between the Opera House audience for light comedy and that at the Palace Theatre for variety was more likely to have been one of degree rather than a reflection of fundamental social divison.

Chapter 6

Sport

Peter Bailey has described the development of organised sports as 'one of the more remarkable features of the expanding world of mid-Victorian leisure' and goes on to write of 'the popular expansion of the new sports in the 1870s and 1880s' as a major aspect of 'the new leisure world'.[1] Few would question that the second half of the 19th century was a crucial period in the history of sport. During the period major sports, football, rugby, tennis, golf and cricket underwent transformation which involved codification of their rules, the establishment of central governing bodies and the recruitment of a national, even international following among players and spectators.[2] Many of the forms and institutions then established - FA, RFU, MCC (as a governing body) - maintain unbroken traditions until the present day to such an extent that there is a familiarity about sporting events at a national and local level in 1900 which is lacking in 1850.

The growth of sport was related to major changes in working class and bourgeois culture. As Bailey observes, there was very little resistance by the middle class to the spread of sport. Even the fears of religious organisations were belittled as sport was used in efforts to further

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1. Bailey, op.cit., pp.124, 139 and especially ch. 6.

2. On association football, see Tony Mason, op.cit., and James Walvin, The People's Game (1975). On rugby, see Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players (Oxford 1979). See also Christopher Brookes, English Cricket (1978) and Geoffrey Cousins, Golf in Britain (1975). For sport in other countries, see Richard Holt, Sport and Society in Modern France (1981) and Benjamin G. Rader, American Sports (Englewood Cliff, 1983).

their influence especially with the young working-class male.[3] By 1900, for much of the middle class, and especially for the lower middle class, sport rivalled church and chapel as the focus of sociability, the more so as suburban living threatened old geographical ties. At the same time, the identification of some sports, and in particular professional football, with what has been perceived as 'traditional' working-class culture in the inter-war years and with working-class youth culture in the 1950s, has focussed attention on the late 19th century as the period when the link between working-class culture and spectator sport was established.

In the light of empirical research, historically ill-informed notions of organic relationships between football in particular and working-class culture are no longer tenable. Instead, it is clear that during the period 1870-1900, sports which had their origins in other social groups, notably among public schoolboys and university men, were assimilated as part of a historically specific working-class culture. This development in popular culture took place in a negotiated manner, in which entrepreneurs, rational recreationists, religious organisers, professional players and spectators were all involved, but in politically unequal roles. The development has been seen as a homology of that of the capitalist relations of production, in which sports entrepreneurs appropriated control of production, imposing rigid work discipline and exploitative terms of employment on players and marketing sport to a largely passive audience. This view, whoch dominates Taylor's and Critcher's

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3. Yeo 1976, and above, ch. 3.

view of post-war football has been reasserted for the pre-1914 period by Tischler.[4] Jean-Marie Brohm's interpretation of the social significance of sport, based on observation of contemporary developments, views sport in capitalist society in terms of its function in ideological control and as a means by which humans are alienated from their own bodies. Sport has been transformed from use value (minimally, as exercise) to exchange value (spectator sport), and is an effective means of reproducing certain ideological elements in capitalist, specifically monopoly capitalist, production. Brohm writes that

> Sport acts as a bloc of virulent repression and it is correspondingly difficult to bring its socio-political meaning and its ideological functions for state monopoly capitalism to the surface.[5]

Brohm lists a number of 'reactionary ideological functions of sport' and finds that modern sport is 'a class institution, totally integrated into the format of capitalist production relations and class relations'.[6]

The theses of both Brohm and Tischler are productive of questions requiring empirical investigation, although the present study finds little to support their applicability to the period of formation of modern sport. It remains to be demonstrated how far sport was integrated into capitalist relations. If, as is suggested here, this process took place in a negotiated manner, rather than an imposed one, significant disfunctions may be expected. The association of sport at various times with public disorder, gambling, drinking, Sabbath breaking and absenteeism

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4. Steven Tischler, Footballers and Businessmen (1981); Ian Taylor, 'Soccer Consciousness and Soccer Hooliganism' in Stanley Cohen (ed.), Images of Deviance (1973); Chas Critcher, 'Football since the war' in John Clark, Chas Critcher and Richard Johnson (eds.), Working Class Culture (1979).

5. Jean-Marie Brohm, Sport, a Prison of Measured Time (1976, English ed. 1978), p.2.

6. ibid., p.85.

are all cogent examples. Tischler's view of sport as a form of orthodox capitalist production leads to questions of just how profitable sport was at the time. Both views demand the examination of the motives and social role of those who contributed to the development of sport and sporting institutions.

By contrast, Dunning relies on the liberal sociology of Elias, derived from Weber, and discusses the long-term development of sport in terms of growing rationality, marked by the dominance of codified rules, diminishing violence to persons and animals and 'modern time-economy.[7] Such a perspective has the disadvantage of all modernisation hypotheses, in that it denies agency, and does not locate change to specific social practices. Ultimately, a theory of increasing rationality becomes a post-hoc generalisation rather than a powerful tool for historical analysis.

The aim of the present study is to examine in detail the processes of negotiation by which sport developed in Leicester between 1850 and 1914, paying particular attention to the identity and motivation, explicit or otherwise, of participants. The heterogeneity of activities and actors make it unlikely that a single macro-explanation will adequately embrace all features of the development of sport, but certain opposites recur, in particular, the demands of social reformers and those of commerce, and the differing priorities of entrepreneurs and a changing popular culture.

The historiography of sport in Leicester has hitherto confined itself to individual studies of major sports, and particularly to the

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7. Dunning & Sheard, op.cit.

principle team in football, rugby and cricket and their precursors. After the period covered by Temple Patterson's work, there has been no attempt to relate changes in sport to wider social change.[8]

A. Sport 1850-70. Traditional survivals?

Pre-modern sports, variously referred to as 'folk games', 'folk forms', some of which prefigure modern sports while others became extinct without lineage, are typified by Delves as public, improvised and inclusive. They have neither codified rules nor bureaucratic governing bodies, and usually tolerate high levels of violence.[9] Holt, who describes the predominance of similar sports in France until the 1890s, notes a fundamental distinction from modern sport in that 'the quest for victory' had yet to establish itself as the central objective of games.[10] In many cases, games were highly localised, linked to popular annual festivities and involved elements of saturnalia, symbolically challenging an accepted authority in what served as a beating of the bounds of the moral economy of the life of the community. Social and economic change, associated by writers variously with industrial capitalism, urbanisation or modernisation, led to the decline of such sports in Britain and the USA in the early 19th century and in France at the end of the century. In a number of cases, the efforts of local authorities to suppress or replace such traditions, usually in the name of public order or the convenience of

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8. VCH Leicester Vol. 4; E.E. Snow, A History of Leicestershire Cricket vol.1 . (Leicester 1949); Noel Tarbolton, From Fosse to City (Leicester, nd, 1948); Temple Patterson, op.cit.

9. Anthony Delves, 'Popular recreation and social conflict in Derby, 1800-1850', in Yeo and Yeo (eds.), op.cit.

10. Holt, op.cit., p.4.

traders, led to major protest, of which the Derby football (1847-53) and Stamford Bull-running (1835-7) are perhaps the best attested. As Delves and Stedman Jones make clear though, the lines along which rival cultural forces were drawn up were not those of bourgeois and proletarian, and ambivalent attitudes towards the older popular culture were felt on both sides.[11]

Wider social and political conflict and the new police forces of the 1840s and 50s made old sports particularly sensitive issues. But, just as Cunningham warns against acceptance of a simple model of total suppression of popular culture followed by its reconstruction along new lines with the transition from rural to urban society, so it is necessary to beware of the view that popular sports and their values were obliterated before 1850. Holt warns that 'Traditional rites of violence and modern commercial influences should not be regarded as alternative explanations when in fact they are complementary'.[12] He goes on to examine ways in which violent local patriotism in rural France, which had found expression in pitched battles between villages in the 18th and 19th centuries informed the new sports in early 20th century, citing south western rugby as an example. Survival of 'traditional' sports could thus be at the level of values as well as practices.

Leicester's calendar custom game was called the Whipping Toms and took place every Shrove Tuesday.[13] It involved the possession for the day by a group drawn from the lower orders of the right to receive

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11. Delves, op.cit.; Stedman Jones, (1976).

12. Holt, p.138.

13. Cunningham, op.cit., pp. 78-9; Report of the Town Improvement Committee 1845.

a toll from anyone walking through the Newarke , on pain of being whipped out of the area. William Gardiner speculated that its origins lay in the difficulty of clearing the square in order to close the adjacent town gates. He described three whippers and hundreds of followers armed only with staves for defence. In his father's time - presumably c. 1750, Shrove Tuesday was further celebrated with cock-throwing, single-stick and wrestling, but there is no record of such activities in the 1840s.[14]

Suppression of the Whipping Toms followed conventional lines. After an outrage the year before, when a clergyman was asaulted, the Watch Committee decided to act against what the Leicester Journal called 'disgusting and abominable scenes'. Fifty Special Constables were recruited and, when a boatman named Burley threw up a football as a signal to start, seventeen arrests ensued, all of them men. In court, one told the judge that 'it was a practice from time immemorial', but to no avail. Burlay was fined 40/- and one Thomas Ratcliffe 20/-. A third man was bound over and the custom was effectively abolished. An activity which directly asserted the potential of popular control of the streets had unacceptable political implications in a town with a recent history of Chartist and anti-Poor Law mass protest. It is of interest too that the leader, Burley, was a boatman, not a group who had been prominent in political protest, but one which Joseph Dare at least considered to be one of the most depraved in Leicester.[15]

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14. William Gardiner, Music and Friends, Vol. I, (Leicester 1838), pp. 365ff.

15. LJ 19.2.47; LC 23.1.47; 20.2.47. LDM 1852, p.22.

Shortly afterwards, an attempt was made to suppress the annual collecting of money on Plough Monday. While this bore little resemblance to modern sport, its similarity to the Whipping Toms is sufficient for it to merit discussion here. Groups of young men, dressed in outlandish clothes collected alms from householders and in the streets. Mrs. T. Fielding Johnson, wife of a shoe magnate, recalled in 1901 that they were

> bedenizened yokels, with reddened faces, and grotesquely clothed [who] performed a rough dance in the streets and presented a money box with much uncouth urgency.

Isabel Ellis recalled that the custom marked the first day for ploughing common land, and lasted in Rearsby, Leicestershire into the 20th century. She described labourers at Glenfield with blackened faces singing 'quaint old songs'. But in the 1850s, the practitioners of the custom in Leicester were regarded with no such nostalgic affection, nor indeed were they agricultural labourers. The Leicester Journal reported in January 1852 that Leicester framework knitters who had been stopped by the police from singing for alms in the street while unemployed had assembled in Belgrave Gate on Plough Monday to prevent 'plough boys' from Thurmaston practising the custom in the town. The Thurmaston men, who according to the Journal were more stocking makers than plough boys, were stoned and two or three policemen were needed to escort them safely away.[16]

By 1873, the custom, now confined to the suburbs, was evidently dying out and few plough boys were to be seen. Those that there were

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16. Mrs. T. Fielding Johnson, Glimpses of Ancient Leicester (Leicester, 1906), p.415. I.C. Ellis, op.cit., p.75; LJ 16.1.52.

were resented as a nuisance and two, David and Amos Broadrick, were given three days for being drunk and disorderly. They appeared before the magistrate in festival dress, one decked with rosettes and the other 'attired as a female'.[17]

In the light of these two incidents, it is clear that Plough Monday was not suppressed as the Whipping Toms were. Hostility in 1852 came from unemployed hosiery workers, resentful at their own plight, anxious to assert territorial rights to such alms as might be available in the town - a kind of plebian act of settlement. Resentment by town workers of those from the county, where labour was less organised and could threaten efforts by Leicester framework knitters to obtain better terms of employment may also have been called into play here. The custom was already in decay, its original meaning lost in an industrial community, exploited by village outworkers as a straightforward source of additional revenue. Greater prosperity in the town may have allowed the custom to continue into the 1870s unmolested by attacks from urban workers. The few participants seem to have seen the occasion as one for festivity as well as alms gathering, and still kept up some form of traditional costume. By the 1870s though, social segregation and changing standards of public behaviour made drunkenness of this kind unacceptable in the suburbs. Police intervention was inevitable.

Alongside such annual events, which also included fairs, wakes, such as those at Belgrave and Humberstone, and the race meeting,[18] there

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17. LC 18.1.73; LJ 17.1.73.

18. Leicester races, held between 1804 and 1883 on the Racecourse by London Road (now Victoria Park), was a major festival, lasting for two days in September or October. It attracted both county and a massive popular following, and Race Week was one of Leicester's two main holiday weeks, along with Whitsun. The old meeting was abolished in 1883 when the Jockey Club withdrew recognition of the gate-money course at Oadley. See Jeremy Crump, '"The Great Carnival of the Year", the Leicester Races in the 19th century', TLAHS LX 1983-4.

existed a range of informal sporting activities, beyond middle class control and carried on without central organisation. Such sports may have origins which were comparatively recent, the pastimes of a workforce with a sizeable immigrant community. Their 'traditional' aspect is due to their informality, rather than any ancient origin.

In 1852, Joseph Dare gave the impression that popular recreations were undergoing absolute decline, and lamented 'the passing of the maypole along with the bearstaff', yet he was equally ready to condemn the activities of Leicester's working class on the Pasture and of youths who 'congregate in working hours and pass their time by carrying on all sorts of loose games'. Dare's regret was only nostalgia for sports acceptable to middle class sensibilities and stripped of unregenerate cruelty. He feared popular culture outside bourgeois control, and hence condemned it.[19] Nor was he alone in such an unsympathetic view. In 1862, a deputation of land occupiers confronted the Watch Committee with a complaint about Sunday recreations, naming specifically pigeon flying, dog fighting, 'running naked' and pitch and toss.[20] It is difficult to approach any more closely such activities, to acquire an understanding of the informal rules and aesthetics which governed them since their practitioners have left no records of their sports. In order to gain any insight at all, it is necessary to turn to legal cases and the complaints of the moralists.

A distinguishing feature of 'pre-modern' sport was the central place of cruelty to animals, and of contests involving animals. There

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19. LDM 1852. ibid., 1861. On the efforts of William Biggs's efforts to revive old sports and games, see LC 7.5.53.

20. CM 42/8/22.4.62.

was a great affection for dog sports in 19th century Leicester. As late as 1886, the Pall Mall Gazette reported that 'The Leicester rough is ... greatly addicted to small white dogs and small brown rats, a keen "sportsman" ...' while Robert Read noted in 1881 that there was a rat pit in Soar Lane, owned by a Mr. Terry, which was 'patronised by dog fanciers from the nobleman down to the nailer'. St. Paul's church magazine reported in 1904 that some older members of the congregation could still remember a rat pit at a pub called the Beehive, and spoke in terms of social progress made since such times, which implies that ratting was considered a thing of the past at least in the West End of Leicester at the beginning of the 20th century.[21] Read's example suggests that ratting had been more persistant than many imagined.

Dog fighting was seen by Dare as an indication of depravity, common among adults in 1852, but by 1864 particularly prevalent among the Irish and the young. Official efforts were made to suppress the sport. In 1847, one Thomas Bacon was convicted on information from an agent of the Animal's Friend Society for urging on two dogs to fight in Sanvey Gate. Imposing order on the Pasture and the Meadows was another matter, and they remained a principle site for canine sport. In 1870, a complaint was made to the Watch Committee about rabbit coursing there on Sundays. Dog racing was similarly popular, but attempts to regulate the sport and bring it within a commercial framework, such as George Bingley's series of dog handicaps at the Belgrave Road ground in 1882

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21. Robert Read, op.cit., St. Paul's Magazine, January 1904.

do not seem to have been successful.[22] Commercial dog racing was only to acquire a following in the 1920s.

Nor were dogs the only animals to arouse Dare's condemnation. In 1868 he complained that 'Dogs and rabbits, fowls and pigeons, birds, ferrets and guinea-pigs, in confined dwellings, create filth and disease ...'. Several of them were also a potential stimulus to betting and, where fancies' clubs met in pubs, to drink. The Leicester Fancy Rabbit Club (f.1851) had its headquarters and half-yearly shows at the Robin Hood in Gallowtree Gate, for example. Such consideration lay behind Dare's statement that 'The botanist has a harmless and useful hobby. I wish as much could be said for the bird fancier'.[23]

Pigeon flying was considered to be an especial nuisance in the 1850s. As Mott points out, pigeon flying, strong in industrial villages and, in London, among East End weavers in the 1840s, existed in two forms. Long-distance flying, a product of the railways, was respectable and highly organised, whereas short-distance racing was usually for gambling. The latter was the cause of respectable fears in Leicester in the 1850s, where framework knitters shared a similar occupational culture to those mentioned by Mott. The Leicester Journal reported in February 1851 that a group of 50 - 60 youths had assembled in Asylum Street to watch flying for wagers on a Sunday afternoon, and five of the most active were fined 5/-. These fines were not sufficient to suppress the sport, though, and in 1859 a maximum penalty of 20/- was introduced under the Local Government Act against pigeon flying within

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22. LJ 19.3.47. CM 42/10:25.1.70. Sporting Life 30.8.82.
23. LDM 1868. LC 5.3. & 12.3.53.

the borough on Sundays. Unfortunately, evidence has not been found to show how successful the ban was.[24]

Much of the interest in such pursuits as dog and rabbit breeding and pigeon flying was channelled from the 1860s on into clubs, societies and shows, while the physical space required for unorganised pursuits was systematically denied to their devotees by policing, bye-laws and the conversion of open space into parks. No such respectability was available for cockfighting or poaching. The former was already in decline by the 1820s and came to represent for the improving Liberal hierarchy an unholy alliance of an irresponsible aristocratic elite and the potentially uncontrollable lower orders, much as did horse racing and hunting. The prosecution of the Marquis of Hastings for cockfighting at Donnington Hall in North Leicestershire in 1863 was thus an occasion for anti-aristocratic indignation by the Liberal Leicester Chronicle, the more so since the match took place on a Sunday. The editor, James Thompson, exclaimed that

> It is a scandal to society that a young nobleman, born to be a legislator, should be convicted of indulging in a low and cruel sport, in those very hours and on that day on which his neighbours of all ranks are engaged in the worship of God.[25]

There is no sign, though, that cockfighting maintained a popular following after the closing of the old cockpits such as that at the Saracen's Head. The withdrawal of open aristocratic patronage led to the collapse of the sport, and publicans were unwilling to risk prosecution by promoting it.

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24. James Mott, 'Miners, weavers and pigeon racing' in M. Smith et.al., (eds.), Leicester and Society in Britain (1971). CM1/9:24.5.59.

25. LC 27.6.63.

Poaching was a very different matter. It was in large part, of course, an economic activity by which efforts could be made to supplement family income, albeit illegally. But as James Hawker's Journal shows, there was also a cultivation of poaching for its own sake, for the pleasure of the chase, and of being chased and eluding capture, of outwitting gamekeepers and defying unjust laws which were at variance with Hawker's Radical politics. Much of Hawker's poaching took place in Northamptonshire, but he went to Cadby, a village neighbouring Leicester, in 1857 when he joined the Militia, and again after 1880. For Hawker, poaching was a plebian form of hunting. He wrote that

> If I had been born an idiot and unfit to carry a gun - though with Plenty of Cash - they would have called me a Grand Sportsman. Being Born Poor, I am called a Poacher.[26]

Access to neighbouring fields was easy for town dwellers, especially before suburban growth, and there were frequent complaints from landowners of damage to fences and several trials for poaching.[27]

Following the hunt was at one stage a popular pastime in this county town of a hunting shire, at least up until the 1850s. On Christmas Day, 1853

> In the direction of Uppingham especially there was an immense out-pouring of townsfolks, many of whom were bound for the village of Thurnby to witness the Quorn Hounds throw off. Almost all the sporting men of the town were present, but those on foot were bound to disappointment.. for the "throw-off" did not take place at Thurnby.[28]

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26. James Hawker, A Victorian Poacher (1904. Oxford ed. 1961).

27. e.g. LC 24.12.53. George Cable and five others took 21 rabbits in the Abbey Meadow, LC 28.10.69. Thomas Cort was fined £5 for taking a hare in New Parks, LC 27.7.78.

28. LC 31.12.53. David C. Itzkowitz, Peculiar Privilege (1977) is a history of hunting in Britain.

But such popular sporting interest in hunting was not encouraged as the sport became increasingly exclusive, nor is there much evidence that the town's elite became involved.

As with poaching, the dividing line between the sport of prize-fighting and other categories of activity, in this case self-defence, criminal assault and the assertion of status within the community and neighbourhood, is blurred. While at one end of the spectrum prize-fighting was highly, if illegally, organised, at the other, settling of old scores between men who were not regular fighters could be the occasion of eager gatherings of spectators and even of betting. Only in the 1880s did commercially organised asaults at arms and then boxing tournaments offer legal alternatives. There is no evidence though that boxing became a popular working-class pursuit in Leicester as it did in East London before the First World War.[29]

Levels of violence on the streets and in public houses seem to have been high during most of our period to judge from innumerable cases for assault reported in the press.[30] The settlement of personal disagreements by fighting was a common occurrence in large parts of the town, and the ability to fight was no doubt a valuable social asset, hence the admiration for prize fighters. As Dare noted of the interiors of houses in the All Saints area, 'The walls are bedizened now, in numberless instances, with representations of prize-fighters, banditti, notorious highwaymen, or mysterious ruffians ...'.[31] Such informal fighting seems,

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29. Sporting Life 20.1.83 for report of an assault at arms at the Floral Hall. LDP 28.2.93; 7.10.93 on Leicester boxers. For promotions by the Leicester Sports Syndicate at the Boulevard Rink, LDP 25.11.1913. The centre of Leicester boxing c.1945 was in the Dixie Arms, St. Peter's Lane (see note in Leicester Mercury picture library). On boxing in the East End of London, see Stan Shipley, 'Stan Causer of Bermondsey', HWJ 15 Spring 1983.

30. cf LDM 1861, 1865, 1872.

31. ibid., 1850.

from such slender evidence as is available from press reports, to have been carried on within rules of acceptable conduct. In 1887, a 34 year-old plasterer, Arthur Taylor, of Sanvey Gate, died from injuries received in a fight with Samuel Fowkes, a dyer, aged 27, of Barston Street. The incident, which led to trial at the assizes, was the outcome of a long-standing dispute between the two after Taylor had cut open Fowkes's head with a pewter pot the previous year. A meeting in the Star Inn led to agreement to fight the matter out on the Pasture, where they met after closing time. A witness reported that a crowd gathered to watch a fight of many rounds which lasted 30 - 40 minutes. Two to three minutes before the end, Taylor exclaimed 'You _____. You have given me one; you have kicked me'. Fowkes was quick to deny the accusation. Afterwards, Taylor 'gave over', proposing a wager for a further fight, which Fowkes refused. At the assizes, Fowkes was found guilty of manslaughter but received only the seemingly lenient sentence of two weeks hard labour as the judge found it 'a fair stand-up fight'.[32]

The incident is indicative of certain aspects of popular culture. The fight was organised into rounds, and there was a commonly held view that kicking was not allowed in settling the dispute. It had quasi-legal sanction in that the judge defined it as a fair fight. That such a fight could have lasted over half an hour on a Saturday night after closing time on as infamous a spot as the Pasture (in 1887 reduced to a small area alongside Abbey Park) suggests almost wilful negligence on the part of the police, as if they preferred to allow differences

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32. LC 29.10.1881; 5.11.87.

to be settled in this way rather than being involved with its suppression. Taylor's offer of a wager for a further fight implies a wish to regain lost honour and standing in the eyes of the crowd. Although all too serious in its origins and outcome, the fight shared some characteristics with prize-fighting, but neglected the division between symbolic and real conflict which is fundamental to sport.

Fighting need not be so serious in purpose, but a further example reiterates the point that it was a rule-bound activity. In March 1875, a correspondent of the Midlands Free Press reported a Saturday night incident on the Pasture at 10.30 when a large crowd gathered to watch. He noted that

> A large ring was made, and very soon the two combatants came into the middle half-drunk ... "Shall ye want a referee Tubby?" To which inquiry the reply was "No, we'll fate till one gi's in, and then we'll see who is the tuffist of the two. Here Sweater, 'old my togs ...".

'Time' was called, and the fight, which lasted at least three rounds before the police were called, provided spectators with obvious pleasure. Wet towels were provided for the contestants between rounds.[33]

In this case, the purpose of the fight was a legitimate sporting one - to find who was the toughest of the two, that is, the superior fighter. It took place in a more sporting spirit, although there is no evidence of betting or fighting for a wager. But such fighting remained illegal, and both informal fighting of this type and more highly organised prize fighting had been forced out of doors or into secret locations. In 1847, the police had cautioned a beerhouse keeper in Dover Street against permitting sparring in his house. On the occasion tickets had

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33. MFP 27.3.75.

been issued announcing that a match was to 'come off' for the benefit of a fighter Mickey Bent, but the police took steps to prevent it. From then until the promotion of boxing in the 1880s, fighting by Leicester men was illegal. Local fights took place on Mowmacre Hill in 1889 and in a bakehouse in Aylestone Park in 1878 while big matches, for which rail transport was organised, took place in Nottinghamshire or conveniently out of the reach of Leicester police in Rutland.[34]

There was a group of Leicester men who seem to have had some status as prize fighters proper rather than mere Saturday night brawlers, and their activities drew the attention of police in their efforts to stamp out fighting. John Almey was mentioned in two cases in 1862 and 1863, the former in connection with threats from Mickey Bent for pulling out of an agreed contract. Bent was bound over for £20 as a result. In each case, fights were to take place for £10 a side.[35]

One of the latest examples for which evidence has been found in the neighbourhood of Leicester was that in Aylestone Park in 1878, although the Mowmacre Hill case shows prize-fighting persisting to the end of the next decade. In the former case, a crowd of c.200 gathered in the store room of a bakehouse to watch a fight held in a ring between a bricklayer's labourer, J. Orton, and William Burney, a shoe hand. Orton had recently been prosecuted for a previous fight. On this occasion they were fighting for £7 a side. By the time Supt. Moore, who had suspected the place for some time, and other police arrived, the fight

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34. LC 4.5.89; LC 5.10.78; LDP 8.1.83; LC 17.1.63. On travel to prize fights, see Cunningham op.cit., p.159.

35. LJ 18.4.62; 17.1.63. For other Leicester pugilists, see SLR 27.11.91 on death of Joseph Collins, later shoe manufacturer, and LDP 23.9.93 concerning Alf Suffolk, aged 75, arrested for jewel theft in S. Lambeth.

had been proceeding for an hour, although with gloves. From Moore's suspicions and the equipment in the room, it appears that prize fighting had been going on in Aylestone Park for some time.

From the evidence assembled here, it appears that folk-games of the communal type were extinct in Leicester before 1850, with the exception of the Plough Monday celebration, which is not really a game anyway. What is found instead is a wide range of sports and related physical pursuits which may have had ancient roots in Leicester but which were certainly characteristic of an urban industrial population and of the occupational cultures of Leicester's workforce. The preponderance of animal sports may indicate recent experience of life in the countryside or industrial villages, as is appropriate for a population with a large proportion of migrants from surrounding counties. The sports shared a low level of formal organisation and lacked codified rules. Nearly all involved physical violence or animals. Many were eminently suited to gambling. Some, the less organised fights, pigeon racing, seem to have had no promoter or organiser, while in other cases publicans acted as promoters. Only such peripheral organisations as the Fancy Rabbit Club show evidence of more formal organisation. Above all, these activities, unlike racing and cricket, which enjoyed the patronage of county and urban elites, were regarded as at best unrespectable and frequently as illegal. With the rise of commercial attractions, notably cycling in the late 1870s and cricket and football in the 1880s and '90s, these sports become less prominent, or acquired 'legitimate' forms - long-distance pigeon racing, boxing. It is unlikely that they disappeared entirely, as the long persistence of ratting and prize fighting indicate. While they ceased after the 1880s to have the same attraction for the attention of the police, magistrates and moralists, they may have persisted as features of the culture of specific sections of the working class.

## B. The transformation of sport in Leicester

### i. Introduction

During the period from c.1870 until the first decade of the 20th century, sport in Leicester underwent major changes, acquiring a number of the characteristics of 'modern' sport. It was at this time that the town acquired several of its major sports clubs and sporting institutions, or, as is the case in football, their direct predecessors. This is not to assert that popular culture was somehow fixed at this time in a form which then remained unchanged for decades, a view favoured by those who believe in the existence of a 'traditional' working class culture with origins in the 1880s and 1890s. The continued existence of a club does not necessitate a rigid constitution or pattern of ownership. Even if they could act as a conservative force, the meanings attached to sport by participants and spectators are unlikely to have gone unchanged. Much of the research into football since 1945, for example, has sought to establish discontinuities in the relationship between the sport and a changing working class. Nevertheless, the last quarter of the 19th century saw the creation of institutions radically different from those which had previously existed in both aims and social composition. Popular sport in 1900 bore little relationship to that in 1850.

Where old sports survived, there were decisive breaks in their traditions. Racing, reinvigorated in the 1860s after years of slow decline due to low prize money, was transformed from an open to a gate money meeting in 1883. Cricket, having flourished at the Wharf Street ground until the 1850s dwindled until its revival by the Leicester and Leicestershire Cricket Association (f.1873). Professional pedestrianism, popular from the 1840s, was rivalled if not at once replaced by amateur athletics, promoted by county and city elites and institutionalised

in events and bodies such as the Leicester Athletic Society (f.1868), the Belgrave Athletic Sports and Races (f.1870) and the Stoneygate School Athletic Sports (f.1867).[36]

From the late 1870s, new sports began to achieve popularity with participants and large audiences, and in many cases local bodies, usually with national affiliations, were set up to regulate them and to organise leagues and other competitions. Cycling was Leicester's most popular sport for much of the 1880s, to be replaced in the following decade by soccer, rugby and cricket. Bodies such as the Leicestershire FA (1887), the Leicestershire RFU (1887), the Leicester and Leics. Cricket Association (1873), the Leicester Bicycle Club (1876) and a local branch of the National Cyclists' Union (1892) were established. So-called minority sports such as rowing (Leicester Rowing Club 1881) and swimming (Leicester Swimming Club 1881) were similarly organised.

The regulation of sport was a product of, and further facilitated, a transformation of middle-class, and particularly nonconformist, attitudes towards leisure. While there had always been some middle-class support for sport, notably for the races, it had been an issue making for disagreement between different fractions of the class. While such contradictions were never finally resolved, the use by religious organisations of sport and the growth of the lower middle class were significant influences on the shape which the new sporting organisations took. Paternalistic factory owners, such as Corah, had been encouraging cricket among their

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36. LJ 5.11.47. LC 2.4.53, 16.4.53. LC 27.3.73, 28.6.73, 30.8.73. LDP 7.7.83. On the transformation of working class sport in the last decade of the 19th century in Britain as a whole, see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition (1983), pp.298-9.

employees since the 1860s, and such vice-presidential benevolence spread to town-wide organisations. Later still, exclusive middle class sports were developed, notably golf, tennis (Leicester Tennis Club f.1878) and motoring (Leicester Auto Club 1899).

Two types of organisation dominated this phase, voluntary organisations and joint stock companies. These were generally complementary rather than antagonistic. Leicester Fosse FC was transformed from a voluntary organisation into a joint stock company in 1898, but a more common pattern was for joint stock companies to provide facilities which were leased to voluntary organisations. Thus the expansion of sports facilities was catered for by organisations such as the Leicester and Nottingham Skating Rink Co. (f.1876), the Leicester Cricket Ground Co. (f.1877) and Belgrave Road Ground Co. (f.1880).

The growth of sport made considerable impact on the local press. Local weeklies gave only occasional coverage to sport in 1873, usually items on specific events in the 'Local Notes' column. By 1883, the Leicester Daily Post carried half a column of sporting news every day, which had increased by 1893 to up to two pages, with fixture lists, previews and results of local and national events. The Leicester Mercury had a Saturday evening football edition.[37] Such extensive coverage continued to be the norm until 1914, although by 1903, local clubs joined the Football League (1895) and County Championship (1896) and the Tigers (Leicester Football Club, the leading rugby club) acquired a national reputation. Several attempts were made to establish a Leicester sporting

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37. Advertisement in LDP 11.10.93.

paper, but as elsewhere, the effectiveness of the local daily and weekly press reduced the potential audience and none lasted for very long. The prominence of sport in the press, and complaints by churchmen and others that sport took up too much of people's attention, are indications that by 1900, sport had acquired a far more salient place in the consciousness of large sections of the population.

While there was clearly an explicit struggle over 'traditional' recreations and the use of open space for sports including animals or violence, the post-1870 development is to be seen in terms of a more complex hegemonising process. Company and club records relating to three major spectator sports, cycling, cricket and football, form the basis for the following study of the distribution of power within late 19th century sport in Leicester and the use to which it was put.

ii. Sport and Commerce: providing facilities

A distinctive feature of late 19th century sport in Leicester was the existence of a number of joint stock companies established to run sports grounds and other facilities. They complemented functions carried out by individual publicans and owners of fields, such as Clewes and Key, and represent a response to the increased capital requirements of sport, and to perceptions of an increasing demand for Sport. Whereas informal or irregular sports, like fairs, could be accommodated within any open space, new sports, especially cycling and roller skating, required major investment. The companies studied here were formed to provide the necessary capital. As will become apparent, the Cricket Ground Co. was distinct in having a less commercial orientation, but all faced similar commercial problems of maximising income.

A significant precursor of these companies was the Wharf Street Cricket Ground, laid out in 1824 and opened the following year. The ground, described in 1855 as 'the best in the kingdom' was owned by a series of individual proprietors who sought to exploit it commercially by promoting cricket, dances, promenade concerts, firework displays, balloon ascents, pony racing, bowls and quoits, and in 1830 a public dinner to celebrate the victory of the Reform candidate in the borough election. While the pitch was indeed an excellent one, and was used for the North v. South match in 1836, cricket was by no means the ground's sole or even major use. For 24 years it was owned by William Barker, who also ran the Anchor Inn and Cricketers' Hotel, and other proprietors were also publicans. Its demise in 1860 was due to sale of the land for building development.[38] The Town Council subsequently provided a cricket ground on the racecourse, but it did not dominate provision of sports facilities in Leicester until the 1890s. During the 1870s and 1880s, the most vital developments were those undertaken by joint stock companies.

The Leicester Skating Rink was opened in October 1875 before a 'numerous and fashionable company', which included five alderman and 11 councillors.[39] The rink's owners had acquired a franchise for use of Plimpton's roller skates, on which the boom in such rinks was based. While Alderman Kempson celebrated the new venture as a means of promoting 'the muscular strength of the rising generation', the motives of the

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38. Melville's Directory 1855, p.15. Temple Patterson, op.cit., p.173. LJ 27.7.27; 9.5.28. Snow, op.cit., 1949 and 'The Wharf Street Cricket Ground', Leicestershire County Cricket Club Yearbook 1970.

39. LC 9.10.75.

promoters was commercial rather than paternalistic. During the next few months, negotiations took place by which the rink was bought from its owners, two Leicester and two Brighton businessmen, by a newly-formed company, the Leicester and Nottingham Skating Rink Co., which by 1878 had acquired Leicester's Rutland Rink and built the Grand Marble and Alexandra Rinks and Aquarium in Nottingham.[40] The owners received 600 shares in the new company and three of them became board members, under the chairmanship of Aaron de Paas, whose address was given as the Crystal Palace, Sydenham.

The pattern of shareholding in this company was quite distinctive. As with the Leicester Club and County Racecourse Co., a large proportion of shareholders were not resident in Leicester, but unlike any of the other examples here, they were very few in number - 13 in 1876 and 16 in 1886. The directors held 81.7% of the shares, providing a degree of concentration unknown in other companies. (see Table 6.Iii). While the company's registered office was in Leicester or Nottingham, the enterprise represents the efforts of an organisation with strong metropolitan links to exploit the provincial market for leisure in an unambiguously commercial manner .

While the venture was at first successful, the skating boom turned out to be one of many technologically-induced crazes. Frank Birch resigned as secretary of the company in 1883, later reporting to the Board of Trade that since that time the company had ceased trading as receipts

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40. This account is based on material in the PRO file BT 31/2231/10567.

were insufficient to pay interest on debentures. By 1886, the Rutland Rink was being used as a shoe warehouse, and in 1894 the company was dissolved.[41]

The Leicester Cricket Ground Co. was formed in 1877 to buy 16 acres of land in Aylestone from the Leicester Real Property Co. Ltd., who had in turn acquired it from the Rutland estate.[42] A group of six prominent townsmen made the initial agreement with the Property Co., and then formed the Ground Co. From the occupational breakdown of shareholders in 1878 (see Table 6.Ii) it is clear that support for the venture came from an elite group, in marked contrast to the Belgrave Road Ground Co. The nominal list is yet more revealing, since it shows that the company was the province of the core of Leicester's nonconformist Liberal elite, including major hosiery manufacturers (J.H. Cooper, Edwin Corah, Benjamin Russell, John Dove Harris), spinners (Alfred Donisthorpe), engineers (Josiah Gimson), elastic web manufacturers (Luke Turner), shoe manufacturers and distributors (Edward Walker, George Oliver), members of the learned professions (Clement Stretton, A.H. Burgess), borough officials (Edwin Holmes, William Jesse Freer), bankers (T.T. Paget and Thomas Burdett jnr., son of a banker), and merchants (John Sarson, Israel Hart). Several of these had already promoted cricket in their own firms and several were prominent in the temperance movement, on the bench and in the Town Council.

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41. e.g. Sporting Life 16.11.82 concerning a popular handicap race. BT 31 loc.cit.; letter of 13.1.92. SLR 2.10.86.

42. BT 31/14570/11460. E.E. Snow, 'The Grace Road Ground', Leicestershire County Cricket Club Yearbook 1966 and 'Further notes on the Leicester Cricket Ground Company', ibid., 1975. Leicester Cricket Ground Co. Annual Report 19.5.87.

Table 6.1

Shareholding in Leicester Sports Companies

| | | Rink Company 1876 | | Cricket Ground Co. 1878 | | Belgrave Road Ground Co. 1880 | | 1900 | | Leicester Club and County Racecourse Co. 1863 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | % | N. | % | N. | % | N. | % | N. | % | N. |
| i. Occupations | Manuf. shoe | 15.4 | 2 | 38.2 | 38 (2) | 20.7 | 12 | 2.20 | 11 | 10.8 | 7 |
| | Machinists | 30.8 | 4 | 16.1 | 16 | 3.4 | 2 | - | - | 10.8 | 7 |
| | Prof. - man. | - | - | 18.1 | 18 | 6.9 | 4 | 6.0 | 3 | 13.8 | 9 |
| | Shopkeepers (LVs/blks) | 7.7 | 1 (1) | 7.0 | 7 (1) | 39.7 (25.9) | 23 (15) | 18.0 (10.0) | 9 (5) | 7.7 | 5 (3) |
| | Clerks, agents, teachers | - | - | 7.0 | 7 | 8.6 | 5 | 4.0 | 2 | 4.6 | 3 |
| | Clerks | | - | | (5) | | (1) | | - | | (1) |
| | agents | | - | | (2) | | (2) | | | | (2) |
| | Manual shoe trade Building trade | - | - | 4.0 | 4 | 8.6 | 5 (2) | 4.0 | 2 | - | - |
| | Women | - | - | 2.0 | 2 | 1.7 | 1 | 24.0 | 12 | 6.2 | 4 |
| | Gentlemen | 30.8 | 4 | 5.0 | 5 | 8.6 | 5 | 22.0 | 11 | 18.5 | 12 |
| | Misc. Jockey, trainers | - | - | 2.0 | 2 | 1.7 | 1 | - | - | 18.5 (9.2) | 12 (6) |
| | TOTAL | | 13 | 99.4 | 99 | 99.9 | 58 | 100 | 50 | 100.1 | 65 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ii. Distribution | Value of shares | £10 | | £10 | | £10 | | | | £10 | |
| | | % | N. | % | N. | % | N. | % | N. | % | N. |
| | 1 | | | 89.7 | 105 | 74.1 | 43 (10 | 74.0 | 37 ( 9 | 86.2 | 56 (10 |
| | 2-10 | 7.7 | 1 | | | | (32 | | (28 | | (46 |
| | 11-20 | 7.7 | 1 | 9.4 | 11 | 5.2 | 3 | 8.0 | 4 | 9.2 | 6 |
| | 21-30 | - | | 0.9 | 1 | 19.0 | 11 | 8.0 | 4 | - | - |
| | 31-40 | 7.7 | 1 | | - | - | - | 2.0 | 1 | 3.1 | 2 |
| | 41-50 | 23.1 | 3 | | - | 1.7 | 1 | - | - | 1.5 | 1 |
| | 50 | 53.8 | 7 | | - | - | - | 8.0 | 4 | - | - |
| | Total shareholders | 100 | 13 | 100 | 117 | 100 | 58 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 65 |
| iii. Concentration | % held in units ⩾30 | (7 directors hold 81.7%) | | ⩾30 | 3.7% | ⩾30 | 48.0% | 54.6% | | | |
| | >30 | | | >30 | - | >30 | 6.3% | 40.4% | | 26.1% | |
| | Total | 53.8% | 7 | 12.0 | 14 | 1.7 | 1 | nd | | 87.7 | 57 |
| iv. Residence outside Leicester | Leicester | | - | | 14 | | 1 | nd | | | 8 |
| | Others | | 7 | | - | | - | | | (75.4) | 49 |
| | (London) | | (1) | | - | | - | | | - | (23) |
| | Newmarket | | - | | - | | - | | | | (8) |

The subsequent fortunes of the company, and the limited concentration of shareholding suggests that the venture was not undertaken with a view to profit-making, but, as with the Theatre Co. in the 1840s, to provide the town with what was perceived as a cultural benefit. As Sandiford observes, 19th century sports clubs often survived in a commercial environment without breaking even due to the economically irrational behaviour of their patrons. He adds that 'Keeping the county club in motion was considered a vital community service by the late Victorians ...'. He cites Leicestershire CCC as an example.[43] In the present instance, enthusiasm for the sport and a desire to assert group identity led a number of the most prominent bourgeois to provide the necessary material base for the revival of county cricket in Leicestershire. More specifically, it is notable that while the county gentry were more prominent (though never in sufficient numbers) in the County Cricket Club (f.1879) as they had been in Leicestershire cricket since the 18th century, they are virtually absent from the list of shareholders, most of whom were Leicester residents, from Stoneygate, Knighton or the West End, or lived in adjacent villages. Their action was an assertion of the cultural power of the suburban middle class, who were thus laying claim to parity with county society on the latter's own territory, and on terms advantageous to both parties. The regeneration of Leicestershire cricket in the late 1870s is thus an aspect of the unification of urban and industrial property owning elites at a social and cultural level.

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43. Keith A.P. Sandiford, 'Cricket and Victorian Society', Journal of Social History, winter 1983, p.308.

Having set up the ground at considerable cost, the company appointed a manager to run it. Since cricket was as yet hardly a mass spectator sport in the town, it was necessary for the facilities to be used in other ways as well. Income was to be had from estate development and land sale, and the estate value of the company's land, over £28,000 in 1886, could serve as a guarantee for loans. The company's stated aims including building and licensing refreshment rooms and a hotel, and providing for a wide range of sports, and in 1880 it possessed as well as the cricket ground a cycle track, tennis courts and a hotel with stabling. Throughout the 1880s, cycling, rather than cricket, attracted the biggest crowds, except for exceptional matches such as that against Australia in 1878. Even then, the first day crowd of 12,000 was no bigger than that which gathered for the 25 mile bicycle championship of the world in 1884. The Cyclist observed in July of that year that the visit gave the ground a 'more animated appearance than is usual for cricket matches'. In 1886, the county cricket club brought in only 2.3% of total revenue against 32.4% from admissions and season tickets and 49.1% from the sale of refreshments.[44]

The improvement of the company's trading position between 1879 and 1886 (see table 6.2) is generally parallel to the fortunes of professional cycling at the ground. It is perhaps ironic that the immediate beneficiaries of the initiative of the ground company should be largely the followers of a sport whose unrestrained professionalism was at odds with the values of middle class sportsmen.

With the decline of cycling in the late 1880s, the ground diversified into other ventures. The annual Infirmary Sports (f.1880) continued

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44. Wright's Directory 1880.

Table 6.2.

Cricket Ground Co. Annual Balance 1879-86

| | | £ | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1879 | - | 927. | 12. | 5. |
| 1880 | - | 671. | 8. | 9. |
| 1881 | - | 541. | 4. | 10. |
| 1882 | - | 375. | 2. | 0. |
| 1883 | - | 193. | 5. | 11. |
| 1884 | - | 232. | 10. | 8. |
| 1885 | - | 230. | 11. | 9. |
| 1886 | + | 9. | 18. | 2. |
| Total 1879-86 | - | 3,161. | 18. | 2. |

to attract large crowds to Aylestone, while amateur cycling clubs made increasing use of it.[45] The prosperity which underlay the building of a new Pavilion in 1889 and a Ladies' stand in 1891 faded though, and finances which had been precarious during the cycling boom collapsed after 1890. In 1895, the ground was offered to the County Cricket Club who turned it down, and in January 1896, a meeting of shareholders resolved to wind up the company. It remained in liquidation until at least 1914, and was not finally dissolved until 1924, by which time the County Cricket Club had moved to its own ground on the Aylestone Road.[46]

The Belgrave Road Ground Co. was launched in a similar manner. Three inhabitants of the Belgrave Gate area, William Billson, Charles Newton and Henry Illsley, acquired the residual leases of land belonging to the property speculator Charles Harrison. The lease was then sold to the new company, of which they were among the seven original shareholders.

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45. Snow 1966, p.7. The Cyclist 4.6.84; 16.7.84. Leicester Cricket Ground Co. Annual Report 19.5.87.

46. viz. The Cyclist 7.10.91: 'Both the managers of the Aylestone and Belgrave grounds have turned their backs on the professional fraternity ...'. The Cyclist 7.9.92. Snow, 1966, p.8. It is necessary to distinguish between the original Aylestone Ground (the present Grace Road) in the Aylestone Park suburb, and the ground in Aylestone Road, now the Electricity Board's sports ground but used by Leicestershire 1909-45, which is nearer the town centre.

Billson was one of three shareholders also owning shares in the Cricket Ground Co., while Illsley had developed a small music hall in conjunction with his Belgrave Gate pub. Shares were sold more widely to raise the capital necessary to purchase and develop the ground.

From the data on shareholders, it is apparent that the company was owned by people with quite a different occupational profile from the Aylestone Ground's owners. A sizeable proportion of shareholders (39.7% in 1880) were shopkeepers or licensed victuallers, the great majority from the Belgrave Gate area. Only one shareholder lived outside Leicester, and the manufacturers (20.7%) included only Thomas Everard, a brewer, from the town's elite families. The distribution of shares shows a considerable core of about a dozen with holdings of over ten shares, suggesting a commitment to the commercial success of the venture. The large number of 'gentlemen' and women shareholders in 1900 largely represents shareholders changing their occupational description on retirement, or widows who had inherited shares. Some shareholders may thus have seen their investment as a small part of ensuring an income in old age.

The directors and shareholders of the company came largely from the ranks of the petit bourgeoisie and linked the ground to an extremely local popular cultural milieu, similar geographically and in social status to that of the town's music hall proprietors. The presence of a body of licensed victuallers is unusual for any major recreational venture in later 19th century Leicester, paralleled by their involvement with the old race meeting in the 1860s. Further light is thrown on the social milieu of the company by a report of the ground's opening ceremony.[47] The guest of honour was a Tory MP, Colonel Burnaby, accompanied

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47. LC 22.5.80.

by his wife. Prominent Leicester Tory, Millican, and the Licensed Victuallers' solicitor, Haxby, were also present.

While the annual reports from which a sequence of company results could be compiled do not survive, it is implied in various sources that it was never very profitable. The Leicester Town Crier noted in 1881 that 'Bad trade, bad weather, and indifferent management served to doom the prosperity of these grounds during the first year of their opening'.[48] The paper considered that the appointment of J.S. Cooke as manager would improve matters, but he did not long survive a prosecution for permitting betting on the ground in 1883, and spring 1884 found the grounds with no manager and a poor reputation with the bench.[49] At the end of 1885, it was understood by The Cyclist that the ground had been sold for building purposes, and although the directors changed their mind and didn't sell at that time, it suggests that they had some reason to wish to get out of promotion. A memorandum to the Board of Trade confirmed the position, when the company reported that 'For a long time past negociations have been proceeding for the sale of the ground and fixtures, but this has now failed to come to a satisfactory conclusion'.[50]

The annual report of 1887 recorded a working profit of only £9.3.11, which was turned the following year into a loss of £52.8.6.[51] Even so, the latter report thought matters were improving as diversitification went ahead following the decline of professional cycling, and that 'the prospect of the company is much brighter than it has been for some time past ...'. The ground was fully let for the 1889 season, and the Leicester

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48. LTC 9.9.81.
49. LDP 18.10.83. The Cyclist 2.4.84.
50. BT31/2588/13588; memo of 16.12.86.
51. ibid., annual reports 1887, 1888.

Football Club were satisfied with their arrangements for the rugby season. A bowling green had been added and was attracting fresh interest. During the 1890s, the ground seems to have been widely used for cricket and football, and had its own cricket league,[52] but survival was not sufficiently profitable to fend off building development, and the company was wound up in 1900.

A significant factor in the poor performance of the company was the persistent refusal of the magistracy to grant a licence. Although provisional licenses were easily available for specific events, they did not allow the ground to maximise income from refreshment sales in the way that the Aylestone Ground could do.[53] As The Cyclist commented in 1887 after a further refusal, 'Under existing circumstances, the directors are unable to provide that accommodation requisite for the successful running of the company's affairs'.[54]

This is borne out by the 1887 and 1888 annual reports, which show net annual incomes of £378.0.4 and £601.10.10 respectively, 62.8% and 48.1% coming from gate money, against 32.4% for the Aylestone Ground Co. in 1886.[55] The magistrates' refusal to licence the ground was justified by them in terms of the large number of licenses in the area already, and by the poor reputation of the ground due to its association with betting. The contrast with their treatment of the Aylestone ground is sharp, and it is difficult not to see it as undisguised class prejudice

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52. LDP 13.9.97.

53. The Cyclist 7.10.85.

54. ibid 5.10.87.

55. The difference between the two is due to a considerable income from cricket and football rents and the loss in 1887 was due to development of the ground for bowling.

and a further extension of the bench's campaign against the drink trade. The frustration of the company's expectations that a licence would be granted accounts in large measure for the financial weakness of the company and its very popular grounds, even in their heyday in the 1880s.

Finally, the Leicester Club and County Race Course Co. Ltd. represents a further example of the penetration of national capital into the area, although with apparently little success.[56] The high proportion of investors from outside the county (75.4%) and the group of Newmarket trainers and jockeys underline the way in which the establishment of the Oadby course in place of the old race meeting took horse racing out of local control and set it firmly within the national racing circuit controlled by the Jockey Club. The cost of shares (£50 each) excluded popular investment, and while townsmen such as Clement Stretton and Israel Hart had bought shares by 1884, the company, with its head office in the City, was largely separate from local interests, other than those of country gentry such as Earl Howe and the Earl of Stamford and Warrington. The 'gentlemen' who made up the largest single occupational category among shareholders in 1883, unlike those associated with the Belgrave Ground co., were genuinely members of landed society.

Despite the eagerness with which the company was started, as early as 1884 it had ceased trading, and was wound up in 1886, presumably because revenue was not sufficient to pay for the very considerable expenditure involved, the grandstand alone costing £18,000.

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56. see BT 31/3035/17191. On the Jockey Club's support for the Oadby course despite popular feeling for the old race meeting, see Crump 1983-4.

iii. Cycling

Cycling as a sport has received little attention from historians compared with that given to football and cricket. This is in large part due to the greater importance of the latter sports in the 20th century. Moreover, despite its importance as a stimulus to the engineering industry, especially in Coventry and Nottingham, a comprehensive study of the social impact of the bicycle remains to be undertaken. That the bicycle could be used for everyday transport, informal recreation and organised sport makes a full assessment of its role the more difficult. Here it is intended to trace the development of the most highly organised activities, professional racing and amateur clubs. The issue of the impact of greater personal mobility offered by the bicycle is touched upon only in passing.

In so far as historians have written about cycling as a social phenomenon, rather than a technological development, they have tended to concentrate on the effects of the safety bicycle (1885) and the pneumatic tyre (1890) together with the lower purchase price of cycles in the 1890s which transformed cycling from a specialist pursuit, limited largely to the fit, young and male, to a wider public.[57] While this allows them to deal with such issues as the emancipating role of the bicycle in recreation for women, it has led to neglect of study of cycling as a sport in the 1880s, and particularly of professional cycling, which was virtually extinct by the time of the cycling craze of the mid-1890s.

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57. David Rubinstein, 'Cycling in the 1890s', Victorian Studies Autumn 1977. Cunningham, op.cit., pp.135-6. Holt, op.cit. writes of cycling in France in the 1870s that it 'attracted the young bourgeois as an item of conspicuous consumption'.

For a brief period, from the mid-'70s until the late '80s, bicycle racing in Britain, confined largely to purpose-built tracks for want of good road surfaces, attracted a large following of spectators and generated its own branch of the sporting press. Supported in part by manufacturers, for whom racing was a valuable advertising medium, bicycle racing acquired a sizeable professional sector, although the bulk of racing in Britain remained amateur. The conflicting interests of amateur administrators (until 1880, cycling was largely controlled by the AAC), manufacturers, track proprietors and the cyclists themselves created a confused situation regarding payment of riders which provides a neglected area for historians of 19th century attitudes to professional sport.

In the late 1880s, when French cycling turned in large part from the velodrome to road racing, culminating in the establishment of the Tour de France in 1903, cycling in England ceased to be a major spectator sport at all, and the 1890s saw the appeal of football, rugby and cricket decisively established.

This pattern of development is of particular significance for spectator sport in Leicester, where professional cycling was the first sport to establish for itself a large following to support regular events, and as such served as a significant precursor of football in the town. As the Badminton Library volume Cycling observed in 1887,

> there is, especially in the North and Midlands counties, a considerable professional body to whom, as to professionals in other sports, the rules about money prizes do not apply.[58]

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58. The Badminton Library Cycling 1887, p.44.

This distinctive branch of the sport, with a wilful independence of the efforts of the National Cycling Union (NCU f.1876) to govern all competitive cycling in Britain, seems, for reasons which do not seem to be more than accidental, to have been centred around three tracks, Molineux in Wolverhampton and the two Leicester grounds. An item in The Cyclist in 1885 referred to Molyneux as 'the original home' of professional cycling, but soon after their establishment the Leicester grounds had achieved a comparable role. Molyneux crowds were at their largest much bigger than those in Leicester.[59] In March 1884, the Leicester Athlete and Midland Bicycle News noted that 'being taken in hand by the managers of the Wolverhampton and Leicester grounds, professional racing soon began to be more fully recognised and appreciated'.[60]

The editor of The Cyclist, Sturmey, who was himself a prominent member of the NCU, later disputed that the three grounds did in fact control the professional sport, and called attention to other grounds in Birmingham, London, Aberdeeen and Newcastle. It is true that riders from these and other towns were among those who regularly competed in championship races at Leicester and elsewhere, suggesting a wider geographical basis for the sport, but Sturmey's claim was in large part a reaction to the three grounds' rejection of NCU efforts to regularise professional cycling in a manner analogous to county cricket's control of its professionals. There are several indications that the promoters, and the professionals' own organisation, regraded themselves as de facto controllers. In January 1887, the proprietors announced their intention to 'retain if possible,

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59. The Cyclist 22.4.85. The largest crowds in Wolverhampton were 20,000 compared with Leicester's 12,000.

60. Leicester Athlete and Midlands Counties Bicycle News (LA) 12.3.84.

their hold upon the management of the sport'. As The Cyclist's Leicester correspondent noted, they had good reason to do so since, until then, professional cycling had been their major source of income.[61]

Both grounds invested considerable amounts of money in providing cycling tracks, which required not only initial construction but annual preparation shortly before Easter. As The Cyclist observed of a later boom in ground development in 1891, this time for amateur use,

> The building of a proper path entails a considerable expenditure of capital, and it is very rarely that a pure love of sport alone induces men to invest the necessary capital in the direction of a track for cycling ... .

Most, it said, were not profitable, as was the case in the long term for both Leicester grounds.[62] Within a short time of opening, though, the Leicester grounds began to attract sizeable crowds. During 1883, the success of an adopted townsman, Fred Wood, in a series of hard-fought contests with the Wolverhampton rider Howell was the cause of a sharp rise in the size of crowds, so that there were several of 7,000 and, for crucial matches, over 10,000. Such crowds were rarely achieved by other sports, other than the races, at any time before 1914 in Leicester (see Table 6.3). As the Sporting Life observed in September 1883,

> Bicycling has established itself so great a favourite in the estimation of the Leicester folk, that it seems almost impossible to give them too much of the art they consider a good thing. No doubt the eagerness with which they "follow" all important matters is in great measure due to personal satisfaction in their pet townsman, Fred Wood's performances.[63]

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61. The Cyclist 19.1.87.
62. ibid. 25.2.91.
63. SL 10.9.83.

Table 6.3

Cycling - Crowds for major events

| | Aylestone | | | Belgrave | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Date of Source | Size of Crowd | Remarks | Size of Crowd | Remarks |
| The Cyclist | 16.4.81 | 2,000 | 100 miles champ. | | |
| SL | 8.8.82 | 2,000 | 25 miles - Sat. eve. | | |
| " | 4.10.82 | 150 | 20 miles. Sat. afternoon. Rain. | | |
| | | 200 | Match. 2 Leics. men. Monday afternoon. | | |
| MCBN | 28.3.83 | 1,000 | V. bad weather. | | |
| LDP | 16.4.83 | | | 3,000 | 20 miles. |
| " | 28.5.83 | 1,200 | Wood v. Howell. Bad weather. | | |
| MCBN | 13.6.83 | 5,000 | 20 mile professional. | | |
| LDP | 11.6.83 | | | 5,000 | Howell v. Wood 20 miles. |
| " | 9.7.83 | | | 5,000 | 10 miles |
| " | 21.7.83 | | | 7,000 | Howell v. Wood 20 miles. |
| " | 7.8.83 | | | 7,000 | 10 miles. Bank Holiday Monday. |
| MCBN | 29.8.83 | 10,000 | 20 miles. | | |
| LDP | 25.8.83 | | | 20,000 | |
| " | 1.9.83 | 12 - 15,000 | 20 miles. £50 belt. | | |
| " | 15.9.83 | 6,000 | | | |
| Leicester Athletic News & Bicycle Record | 16.4.84 | 4,000 | Easter Sat. W & H | 2,000 | |
| " | | 6,000 | Monday afternoon | | |
| The Cyclist | 4.6.84 | 12,000 | 25 miles. H & W | | |
| " | 25.6.84 | | | 7,000 | H & W |
| " | 2.7.84 | 10 - 12,000 | Infirmary Sports | | |
| " | 6.8.84 | | | 4,000 | Howell. 20 miles. |
| " | 1.8.85 | 15,000 | Infirmary Sports | | |
| " | 28.4.86 | 8,000 | 1 mile Amateur | | |
| | | 4,000 | 50 miles. | | |

/cont'd...

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Cyclist | 23.6.86 | 4,000 | H & W. Rain | | |
| " | 7.7.86 | | | 5,000 | Blind Institute Sports. |
| " | 14.7.86 | 8,000 | Infirmary Sports | | |
| " | 4.4.88 | 1,000 | Dull weather. | 5,000 | Howell v. Robb |
| " | ( 1889 | 17,000 | Infirmary Sports) | 4 - 5,000 | Professional tournament. |

The season ran from April until September, during which time there were, at the peak of the sport's popularity, over a dozen so-called championship races in the town.[64] These included races over 1, 5, 10, 20, 25 and 50 miles, but it was the series of 20 mile races which served as the blue ribbon event. The competitors were drawn from a small pool of riders, and the same names recur throughout the period. In 1883, 19 professional cyclists met to discuss forming an association, while in 1887 about 20 voiced their objection to the NCU proposals, suggesting a core of about that many professional riders. By the latter date, The Cyclist wrote of the need to infuse new blood into their ranks, and it seems to have been something of an exclusive occupation in which the total available for prizes was insufficient to support many more. In the late '80s, critics of the circuit tended to belittle these much-vaunted 'world championships'. The Cyclist, on the occasion of discussion of an international championship to be organised by national cycling organisations, commented that

> The world's championships which have hitherto been held have in the main been professional events, which have been repeated half-a-dozen times in the season, and have not ... been productive of any real good to the participants, or been in any way recognised by cyclists at large.

Such championships, it claimed, were really no more than scratch races.[65]

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64. 1884 ....12 (Cyclist 3.9.84); 1885 .... 14 (ibid., 4.11.84); 1889 .... 1 (ibid 13.11.89).

65. The Cyclist 15.4.91.

The rhetoric of 'world championships' was perhaps not intended to be taken so seriously; it was part of the hyperbole by which promoters, like circus proprietors and music-hall chairmen sought to build up the reputation of their acts, and comparable as well to claims made for the representativeness of various All England XIs in professional cricket. Truly representative matches and genuine world championships were themselves products of sporting bureaucracies, without which such titles were unverifiable. Professional cycling, in this as in other aspects, thus belonged to a transitional stage in the development of sport, one in which administrators had not found acceptable of curbing potentially self-destructive commercial tendencies.

One such tendency was the rivalry between the two Leicester grounds, which resulted at times in major fixtures being arranged on the same day at each ground. An agreement to avoid such competition was reached in 1884. The Leicester Athlete and Midland Counties Bicycle News commented that, after three championships in one week in August 1884, 'we can now do with a rest' and that if contests were to remain so frequent, public interest would be bound to wane. Indeed, several analyses of why the sport declined in the late 1880s referred to over-exploitation of potential demand for the sport.[66]

In order to try to account for the popularity of the sport, it is necessary to examine in detail its milieu, and to suggest which elements within it proved attractive to the crowd. There is very little information from which to obtain any clear understanding of the social composition of the crowd, although their very size suggests it included working

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66. LA 2.4.84. Athletic News 6.1.85.

class elements. The ground was divided into an upper and a lower end, with charges of 1/- and 6d respectively. On that occasion, there were estimated to be 4,000 at the upper end and a total estimate of over 20,000, which seems very high. Those who gave evidence at the appeal against prosecution for permitting betting were mostly journalists, and included a plumber from Belgrave Gate who was employed to help count the laps.[67] The only description of crowds at the Aylestone Ground described 'the main road ... crowded with overloaded conveyances and foot passengers ...'. It was remarked by the Leicester Athlete and Midland Counties Bicycle News in 1884 that, when Howell defeated Wood in a match, 'A lot of the working class went "nap" to the last shilling on our ex-champion'.[68]

The attraction of the spectacle itself is not easy for the historian to grasp. Races could last for a very long time - a 100 miles race in April 1881 took six hours and 43 minutes to complete[69] - and only in the late '80s was any attempt made to make the one mile the major event at meetings. With small fields riding such long distances, the effect must have been very like 18th century horse racing, with most of the race 'run' at half speed - what would now be called a tactical race. As early as 1883, the Leicester Daily Post warned that

> If ... the competitors content themselves with "creeping like snails unwilling to school", it is safe to predict that these shows will soon drop, as they did in London, for want of public patronage.[70]

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67. LDP 18.10.83.
68. DL 1.9.84; LA 23.4.84.
69. The Cyclist 26.4.81.
70. LDP 13.10.83.

Complaints about this 'processional element' continued to be heard but, at the peak of the sport's popularity, crowds seemed willing to endure the slow build-up (unless it was raining) in order to enjoy the excitement of the last mile or so. On the biggest occasions, enthusiastic spectators spilled onto the track, on at least one occasion preventing the third and fourth competitors from finishing.[71]

Looking back in 1889, The Cyclist observed that 'The keen rivalry which always existed between Wood and Howell made the sport what it has been in Leicester ...'. It was referring to what was described elsewhere as the 'Howell v. Wood mania', which dominated cycle racing in Leicester from 1883 until 1886, when Wood left on a disastrous world tour. The two men won a large number of championship races, turning the rest of the fraternity into a group of professional also-rans. The central issue was that Wood, although born in Rushden, Northants., had always raced as a Leicester man, having settled in the town in 1880, whereas Howell, who was also based in Leicester during the season, was from Wolverhampton. Their contest was thus a focus for localism, but perhaps Wood was the more attractive still as a representative of Leicester's immigrant workforce. It was made the more immediate by newspaper coverage of their training and plans for the forthcoming season, and by challenges issued from their rival headquarters, which were in public houses. In August 1884, 3-400 of Wood's supporters went to Molyneux to see the two compete. When Wood was at his most successful in 1883, his victories were celebrated with great enthusiasm. The Leicester Daily Post described a victory in that year as

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71. ibid., 9.7.83.

> A scene of excitement not soon to be forgotten ... hats were thrown into the air, ringing cheers went up from the crowd who surrounded him shoulder high to the hotel, where the band struck up "See the Conquering Hero Comes".[72]

While it is dangerous to argue from silences there does not seem to be any evidence of any comparable cultivation of a local sporting hero before this.

As well as the general appeal of Wood as local hero, which did not preclude recognition of Howell's achievements too, the sport offered to at least some of its adherents the inclusivity which Bailey has identified as a central element in the culture of the music hall. The Leicester Daily Post, for example, reported in 1883 after another victory that 'The local man was, as is becoming usual, shouldered by his friends'.[73] Such friends may have included trainers, mechanics and other helpers, but probably also members of Wood's camp, those who frequented the pub which he used as a headquarters. The world of professional cycling revolved around certain public houses. Wood's trainer, Tommy Wright, was licensee first of the Bull's Head, Oxford Street, and later of the Barkley Arms, Bedford Street.[74] Wood himself, on leaving Leicester in 1888, became licensee of the Ferry Inn in South Shields, while another cyclist, Lees, was licensee of The Dolphin.

Further evidence of the strength of the group of 'friends' who were associated with Wood came in 1887 when, penniless in Australia after an expensive legal defence against a groundless charge of theft, his Leicester contacts organised collections for him and raised the £100 needed to pay his expenses and passage home. There was also a

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72. The Cyclist 13.11.84; 20.8.84; LA 6.8.84; LDP 28.5.83.

73. LDP 9.7.83.

74. The Cyclist 5.9.88.

suggestion that a benefit sports be held. Finally, on the occasion of Wood's departure for North Shields, a presentation was made to him at the Floral Hall, attended by over 2,000. The hall's proprietor and cycle warehouse owner J.H. Clarke, presided, and gifts included a diamond tie-pin from the West Leicester Bicycle Club, presumably for his contribution to the sport in Leicester.[75]

There are many similarities between gift-giving and benefaction among Leicester's cycling fraternity and the music hall. The hierarchical relationship between manufacturers, ground proprietors and the cyclists, one in which there were obligations on both sides, was marked by further acts of conspicuous generosity. Howell's victory in an Easter championship at the Belgrave Road Grounds in 1884 was celebrated by a dinner at the Red Cow, Belgrave Gate, given by the ground proprietors. Wood's use of Humber cycles, which he publicly endorsed in an interview given to the press about his successful US tour of 1886, led to plans for the company to give him an illuminated address.[76] At the same time, the system of benefits existed to redistribute income in the business to lesser figures. Much of this was no doubt informal, and many of Wood's friends may have received largesse. There were on occasions organised benefits, such as that for Lees, also a Leicester rider, at the Belgrave Grounds in 1883. Lees had competed throughout the season without success, but the value of his supporting role was acknowledged by the proprietors' grant of a free evening's use of the ground. On that occasion, Lees did a time trial, covering 20 miles in 58 minutes 34 seconds, to beat

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75. ibid., 16.11.86; 28.12.87; 23.11.87; 10.10.88.

76. LA 30.4.84. The Cyclist 6.11.89.

a record set in 1889, while Howell simultaneously attempted the mile record, covering the distance in 2 minutes 40.8 seconds.[77] Even the prizes awarded for races at times served to support an image of gift-giving. While money prizes were usual, the major championships also offered costly trinkets, such as the £50 silver belt which was awarded for the 20 miles championship in 1883. Wood eventually won it outright. Like prizes in amateur races, it offered a further source of wealth to the winner, who could if necessary sell it.[78]

Cycle racing offered ample opportunity for betting. The races had the advantage over horse racing that they took place regularly in Leicester, so that information and gossip were widely available to guide the punter. The Cyclist had already deplored betting on cycle races in an editorial in 1881, hoping that race administrators would do more than just post notices prohibiting gambling. Such strictures had little effect at the Belgrave ground to judge from evidence given at the 1883 appeal. For the magistrates, counsel stated that police had removed betting men from the ground on several occasions, and on August 25 had seen men shouting the odds within the hearing of the manager, Cooke. An Inspector reported that 'They shouted as if they were on the racecourse. They had beeting tickets in their hands, and two of them exhibited tickets in their hats ...'. All this was within 22 yards of the winning post. A PC Keely thought there were 20-30 men there. Another witness said he saw two of them wearing white hats to denote their calling, and some

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77. LDP 25.8.83. Records were always open to question due to poor timekeeping techniques and the lack of a regulatory board.

78. LDP 16.4.83.

of them had clerks. That such was not a unique occurrence is suggested by evidence of the manager's assistant who said, in an unfortunate attempt to defend Cooke, that 'Betting usually took place at championship meetings, but the absence of it that day made him remark to William Cooke that it was a tame affair'.

From evidence given by Cooke's counsel, it seems that betting on cycling was not confined to the course, and prices could be had from the betting fraternity on Humberstone Gate, the central venue for illegal betting in Leicester. In subsequent applications for a drink licence, the Company was at pains to point out that matters had improved since then, but it is difficult to believe that races ceased to be the subject of betting, if less blatantly on the course.

The milieu of professional cycling in Leicester was thus intensely local, in the identification of spectators with local riders, and the activities of coteries of 'friends' and supporters. It had much in common with music hall and with older sports such as prize fighting, pedestrianism and horse-racing, although it lacked aristocratic patronage. The inability - or lack of desire - of the sport's promoters to purge it of some of these elements contributed to its downfall. In 1884, questions were asked in The Cyclist about Wood's defeat by Howells in a number of races. The Leicester Athlete remarked that 'so long as professional riders act on the square they may depend on receiving the support of the public'. The implication was that they were not doing so, and it was suspected that races were being fixed.[79]

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79. LA 27.8.84.

By 1891, both grounds had given up professional cycling, and ultimately the professional cyclist went the way of the pedestrian and the professional rower. By 1900, cycle tracks were largely derelict or had been turned to other purposes. As in France, efforts to diversify meetings with novelty races failed. In Leicester trotting, women's races and contests of cycles against horses were all tried.[80] Interest in professional cycling seems to have declined at Molyneux before Leicester. The most plausible explanation of the decline is in terms of internal factors, the lack of new talent, the absence and retirement of Wood and the development of the safety bicycle. In the 1890s, local identity could find expression in support for professional football.

The importance of amateur cycling in Leicester was not in rivalling the professional sport, but in providing through a number of clubs a form of sociability for young people, largely from the middle class which was wholly secular in its origins and purpose. Indeed, in so far as many excursions took place on Sundays, it served as a depoliticised assault on the bourgeois sabbath.

The bicycle was known in Leicester, and denounced as a nuisance, as early as 1853. Twenty years later it was still regarded as a novelty that a group of eight or nine young men had cycled to Coventry and back in a day. The Leicester Bicycle Club was formed in 1874, and Read noted that there were three clubs in the town in 1881. Yet by 1883, all were apparently moribund. The revival of amateur cycling in Leicester seems

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80. Cyclist 25.2.91; 3.10.1900; 12.9.1900; SL 12.9.82; 4.1.83 re trotting. On women's racing, The Cyclist 13.11.89. For horses racing against cycles LA 30.7.84; LDP 25.6.85. Cf Holt ch. 4.

to have been stimulated largely by the West Leicester Bicycle Club (f.1882). Other clubs followed, and by 1891 ten Leicester clubs were represented at a meet at Longcliffe. While these included such apparently middle class clubs as the Stoneygate Bicycle Club and the YMCA BC, the following year saw the affiliation of the Borough of Leicester Working Men's Bicycle Club to the NCU, suggesting a wider social constituency. By this time, payment by installments made cycle purchase available to an increasing number of people.[81]

These clubs offered a number of activities to their members, of which the weekly meet was the most important in making for social cohesion. In 1903, J.A. Hartopp, president of the Leicester Bicycle Club, related that 'The County Council had created quite a boom in cycling by the use of the stone-roller', but well before then, parties of cyclists were making Saturday excursions to a variety of destinations.[82] The Leicester Rovers Bicycle Club (f.1888) was by 1893 the largest in the town with over a hundred members. The average turnout for a run was 20 and one rider, J. Williams, won a prize for attending 64 of the 66 outings in 1893.[83] Such activities were justified in terms of the benefits of fresh air for those otherwise confined to the town. Sir Thomas Wright told a Leicester Bicycle Club dinner in 1903 that

> There was no doubt that by going out into the country young men got clearer heads, they were able to go out and clarify their intellects, and were therefore better able to take their share in the numerous institutes of the town, and which formed a training for the higher public duties which had to be discharged by one or other of their citizens.

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81. 'We observe that the foolish vehicles or rather machines, are again in use almost every day on the east side of the town', LC 2.4.53. For the cycle nuisance in the 1890s, see The Cyclist 21.9.92. For club activities, see LC 21.6.73. The Cyclist 20.11.89. Read op.cit. MCBN 18.2.85. The Cyclist 17.6.91, 28.12.92 and Rubinstein op.cit.

82. LDP 18.11.1903.

83. LDP 29.11.93.

Cycling was thus seen by Wright as an induction into civic responsibility, and the tone of his speech suggests that he had in mind middle class men.

The clubs each had their own annual sports, and made arrangements with the ground companies for practice. Individual participation in amateur racing was limited in Leicester by the small number of events, chief among which were the Infirmary Sports (f.1880) and Blind Institute Sports. The NCU's relaxed attitude to prizes, preferring to limit their value when the AAC banned them altogether, made for accusations of pot-hunting.[84] Leicester clubs do not seem to have been greatly troubled by the issue of professionalism. The attitude of the secretary of the West Leicester Bicycle Club, justifying the membership of the professional Fred Lees, contrasts with those of ruling bodies in other sports. He said that the club aimed at being exclusive of neither professionals nor amateurs, but

> simply a club for the promotion of rational recreation combined with social enjoyment, and so long as a man is reputable, and is otherwise considered a fit person to be a member, it does not matter whether he is an amateur or a professional.[85]

The major occasion for public display by the clubs came with the annual Infirmary Sports. This event was promoted by a group of employers, but also received the patronage of the Royal Infirmary's established gentry supporters. From 1886, the day of the sports made made a general holiday and, bad weather excepted, large crowds converged on the Aylestone Park grounds for the June event. Like the Abbey Park show, the sports took over some of the functions of the old race meeting and, later,

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84. The National Cycling Union set prize limits for amateurs at ten guineas in 1882 and five guineas in 1886. The Cyclist 26.1.87.

85. ibid 26.10.87.

the Pleasure Fair, as a popular holiday which was distinctly municipal in tone. For cyclists, the day provided an occasion for ceremonial, with a procession to the ground from the town and a prize for the best got-out club, resplendent in their uniforms. The image of the cycle club was self-consciously respectable, anxious to avoid the 'cads on castors' reputation which had been prevalent in the 1870s and to disown the individuals fined for 'furious riding' on the streets of Leicester in the 1890s.[86]

With their uniforms and annual dinners which were addressed by local dignitaries who had in some cases themselves been cyclists for several years, the bicycle clubs represented a quite different aspect of popular culture from the often disreputable world of professional cycling. Although there were points of contact - shown by Lees' membership of the West Leicester Club, or the presentation to Wood, and in the clubs' interest in racing - they remained distinct in their identity and purpose. The peak of popularity of racing in any case preceeded the era of the safety bicycle which was the basis for the expansion in amateur cycling after 1890.

The considerable interest in cycling in Leicester was not the foundation of a thriving local industry. Although there were some Leicester manufacturers, such as J. Parr and Co. and the Ormonde Cycle Co., as well as accessory manufacturers, the bulk of cycles sold in the town were produced elsewhere and dealt with by agents. As The Cyclist remarked,

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86. ibid 2.6.86; 2.7.91; 21.9.92. Badminton Library, op.cit., p.29. Rubinstein, p.48.

'Although Leicester has taken such a prominent position in the past in relation to racing matters, the trade has been very much neglected...'.[87]

The efforts of one entrepreneur of leisure, J.H. Clarke, to boost the Leicester trade were singularly unfortunate. Clarke was proprietor of the Floral Hall until his failure in 1888, and organised two major cycling exhibitions there, both of which lost money. His other ventures included the ill-fated Clarendonia Festival, which lost £1,617. 1. 4, and the West End Cycle Co., which opened a large new depot with over 200 cycles on display in 1886. Clarke also had shops in Leamington and Birmingham.[88] Clarke's debts in 1888 amounted to £6,757. 15. 2 net. His career was that of a local businessman attempting to build up a regional network of leisure-based ventures, but whose local base was too uncertain to support activities on such a scale. As in the case of early music hall chains, Leicester did not offer fertile ground for the ambitious entrepreneur.

iv. Cricket

By the 1850s, Leicester cricket had sunk to a low ebb. A correspondent of the Leicester Chronicle claimed that

> no play has been exhibited worthy of the name of cricket in the town for years, save and except the matches in the Pasture, emanating from the North Club ...[89]

Between 1860 and 1873, no touring teams visited the town, and there were no county matches. Such amateur teams as the Temperance Cricket Club and St. Mary's traced their origins to the late 1860s, and there

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87. The Cyclist 15.4.91.

88. ibid 27.1.86; 24.3.86; 17.12.88. On Clarke's bankruptcy, see ibid., 26.5.88 and 17.11.88.

89. LC 17.12.53.

is evidence of considerable popular interest in the game at a less formal level.[90] A report of excursionists in Bradgate Park in 1863 refers to those who 'amused themselves by playing at cricket, skittles and other games'.[91] The Welford Road recreation ground was also a site for such informal play, and it was common for up to 200 youths and boys to play there at any one time. Thomas Condon, an elastic web weaver, records in his diary playing on the Pasture and Victoria Park in 1869-70, although not as regularly as his more successful brother, Fred Condon, who later played for Leicestershire.[92]

Such interest supported demands for playing space to be made available on the Racecourse and, in 1873, to the formation of the Leicester and Leicestershire Cricket Association, which was made up of representatives of 17 teams aiming to promote cricket in Leicestershire. Their activities included lobbying the Estate Committee for improvements to the cricket facilities on the racecourse and the revival of representative matches. The formation of the county cricket club (1878) and the Cricket Ground Co. (1877) reflect continuing growth of interest in the game in Leicester, which is apparent at another level in the growing number of clubs (see table 6.4). At the end of the 1883 season, the Leicester Daily Post's cricket writer, 'Long Stop' described it as 'one of the longest and best seasons known for many years...'. There was now more cricket played than ever before in the town, although 'Long Stop' doubted if it had the life and excitement of 'the palmy days of the Old Cricket Ground'.[93]

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90. VCH vol. 4, p.286; LC 30.5.63.

91. LC 18.7.63.

92. LC 25.6.64. Condon, op.cit.

93. LC 16.8.73; 25.1.73; Snow 1949. On relations with the Estate Committee see CM 1/14:26.1.75. See also Leicestershire Cricket Association Centenary Year 1873-1973 (Leicester 1973). LDP 29.9.83.

Cricket was firmly established as a popular sport for players and spectators alike.

Table 6.4.

Estimates of numbers of Cricket and Football Teams in Leicester

| | Soccer | Rugby | Cricket |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1853 | - | - | 6 |
| 1863 | - | - | nd |
| 1873 | 6 | | 21 |
| 1883 | 6 | | 41 |
| 1893 | 45 | 19 | 114 |
| 1903 | 74 | 24 | nd |
| 1913 | 108 | nd | 107 |

Sources: LJ, LC, LDP (2nd. Sat. in January & 1st in August 1883-1913).

It was not until 1894 that the County Cricket Club played first class cricket, joining the county championship the following year. Such success as it achieved came largely after its move from the Aylestone Park ground (the present Grace Road) to the Aylestone Road ground in 1901. In 1949, E.E. Snow described the subsequent decade as the golden age of Leicestershire cricket, although the present study will question how far it was able to sustain popular enthusiasm or financial success.

The fortunes of the county club are summarised in Table 6.5. which shows that the club was in permanent financial difficulty. Working losses and accumulating deficits were the norm. Only special appeals for funds in 1907 and 1912 saved it from total collapse. The reason was identified by the club's president, J.W. Logan, in 1908, when he said that only Lancashire and Yorkshire could afford to run county cricket without subsidy on account of their very large following. In Leicestershire, the number of members was always below the target of 2,000, yet the gate was so inadequate that in many years it provided

less than did subscriptions. The club was aware of the need to increase takings, and, especially after the move to a more central location, tried to make cricket a more attractive proposition to a wider public. Over £2,000 was spent on a new stand for the 6d side in 1908, and playing on Saturdays was an innovation introduced at Leicester and taken up elsewhere in 1909. Various season ticket schemes were launched, such as the sale of 'workshop' and 'club' tickets.[94] The figures in Table 6.5 do little to suggest that such initiatives made any impact on gate receipts, which were lower every year between 1909 and 1913 than they had been in 1909.

At the same time, the demands of first class cricket led to increasing expenditure (see Table 6.6 ). Substantial bodies of professionals, who made up the majority of the team, accounted for between one third and half of costs, especially during the most ambitious period between 1902 and 1905, when the county reached fifth place in the championship. In the long run, such costs could not be supported as income was insufficient, and cost-cutting with predictable consequences for results, ensued. Examination of the lists of professionals named in annual reports shows that most served for only a short time, and only nine out of 45 received benefits between 1888 and 1914. In 1912, a policy of employing younger professionals was embarked upon as a cost-cutting exercise.[95]

Fundamental to the weakness of Leicestershire cricket was the ambiguity of its social profile. While the image pursued by county cricket was that of the domination of the sport by the county gentry, in fact its chief supporters were largely from the suburban middle class.

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94. LDP 7.5.1908. Leics. County Cricket Club Annual Report 1911.

95. Leics. County Cricket Club Annual Report 1912.

Table 6.5

Leicestershire County Cricket Club (1). Accounts

| | | a Gate £ | b Subs £ | Ratio (b:a) | Balance £ | Working Profit/ Loss | No. Matches | A/C | Championship Position |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aylestone Park | 1888 | 481 | 434 | .90 | -139 | | 12 | | |
| | (no data) | | | | | | | | |
| | 1890 | 1,008 | 573 | .57 | +440 | | 10 | | |
| | 1891 | 1,021 | 683 | .67 | +540 | (+ 199) | 11 | | |
| | 1892 | 909 | 721 | .79 | +612 | (+ 72) | 12 | | |
| | 1893 | 1,070 | 753 | .70 | +498 | (- 114) | 13 | | |
| | 1894 | (no data) | | | | | | | |
| | 1895 | 959 | 768 | .80 | +166 | | 13 | | 12th = |
| | 1896 | nd | 698 | | +350 | (+ 184) | 9 | | 13th |
| | 1897 | 945 | 693 | .73 | +284 | (- 66) | 9 | | 13th |
| | 1898 | nd | 849 | | +71 | (- 113) | 11 | 600 | 13th = |
| | 1899 | 1,357 | 976 | .72 | -72 | (- 143) | 11 | | 12th = |
| | 1900 | 1,000 | 1,131 | 1.13 | -860 | (- 798) | 13 | 900 | 14th |
| Aylestone Road | 1901 | 2,279 | 1,858 | .82 | -62 | + 1,243 | 13 | 1,130 | 11th |
| | 1902 | 1,485 | 1,779 | 1.20 | -279 | + 205 | 12 | 1,500 | 11th |
| | 1903 | 1,811 | 1,751 | .97 | -606 | - 286 | 14 | 1,702 | 14th |
| | 1904 | 1,782 | 1,759 | .99 | -871 | - 265 | 13 | 1,794 | 7th |
| | 1905 | 2,417 | 1,759 | .73 | -764 | + 107 | 13 | 1,632 | 5th |
| | 1906 | 1,654 | 1,689 | 1.02 | -983 | - 219 | 13 | 1,639 | 15th |
| | 1907 | 1,422 | 1,585 | 1.12 | -1,434 | - 452 | 12 | 1,601 | 11th |
| | 1908 | 1,508 | 1,780 | 1.18 | - 371** | - 371 | 12 | 1,514 | 13th |
| | 1909 | 1,508 | 1,656 | 1.07 | - 883 | - 512 | 13 | nd | 13th |
| | 1910 | 833 | 1,565 | 1.88 | -1,679 | - 796 | 9 | nd | 10th |
| | 1911 | 1,356 | 1,704 | 1.26 | - 645 | - 547 | 12 + 1* | 1,430 | 15th |

/cont'd

| | a Gate £ | b Subs £ | Ratio (b:a) | Balance £ | Workers Profit/ Loss | No. Matches | A/C | Championship Position |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1912 | 1,030 | 1,713 | 1.67 | -1,452 | - 791 | 11 + 2* | 1,550 | 13th |
| 1913 | 1,281 | 1,623 | 1.27 | - 149*** | - 54 | 8 + 4* | 1,560 | 14th |
| 1914 | | | | | | | 1,553 | |

Sources: LCCC Annual Reports, Wisden.

* incl. games at Hinckley, Ashby, Coalville, Loughborough.

** after £2,500 appeal *** £1,357 from debt liquidated
(all amounts to nearest £)

The working loss is taken from club published accounts except when in parentheses, in which case it has been calculated from balances.

Table 6.6i

Leicester County Cricket Club (2). Playing Expenses

| | Total Match Expenses | Expenses per Match £ | Professionals | Cost of Profs. as % of match Expenses | Total Profs.' Wage and Expenses £ | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1888 | 906 | 75 | 1 | | | |
| 1889 | | | | | | |
| 1890 | 966 | 97 | >1 | 9.7% | 94 | |
| 1891 | 1,132 | 103 | >1 | 17.2% | 205 | |
| 1893 | 1,344 | 103 | >1 | 15.7% | 211 | |
| 1894 | | | | | | |
| 1895 | 1,156 | 89 | >1 | 20.7% | 295 | 1st class |
| 1896 | | | >1 | | 295 | cricket |
| 1897 | 908 | 101 | >1 | 33.9% | 308 | County |
| 1898 | | | >1 | | 525 | Champtionship |
| 1899 | 1,459 | 133 | >1 | 40.0% | 584 | |
| 1900 | 1,645 | 127 | 8 | 29.8% | 489 | |
| 1901 | 1,821 | 140 | 10 | 32.5% | 592 | New ground |
| 1902 | 1,814 | 151 | 10 | 38.6% | 700 | |
| 1903 | 1,768 | 126 | 13 | 56.1% | 991 | |
| 1904 | 1,726 | 133 | 13 | 54.4% | 939 | |
| 1905 | 2,013 | 155 | 10 | 43.2% | 869 | |
| 1906 | 1,632 | 126 | 10 | 46.2% | 765 | |
| 1907 | 1,628 | 136 | 13 | 45.5% | 707 | |
| 1908 | 1,633 | 136 | 12 | 30.8% | 582 | |
| 1909 | 1,974 | 152 | nd | 31.4% | 620 | |
| 1910 | 1,278 | 142 | nd | 49.9% | 639 | |
| 1911 | 1,839 | 141 | 14 | 37.5% | 690 | |
| 1912 | 1,883 | 145 | 13 | 32.8% | 618 | |
| 1913 | 1,652 | 138 | 11 | 24.5% | 405 | |

Table 6.6ii

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average 1890-1900 | 106 | | 314 |
| Average 1901-1913 | 140 | | 701 |

Although the club could count on some county support, from families such as the Hazleriggs, De Traffords and the Earl of Lanesborough, support from the county did not equal that from leading urban families, who dominated the club to almost the same extent as they did the ground company. The club was, after all, the result of initiative by the Leicester and Leicestershire Cricket Association, which was itself formed by town clubs. Since the county gentry had had relatively little part in its foundation, and lacked other direct interests in the town, it is perhaps not surprising that they should have been reluctant to give financial support on the scale needed to create an effective county side. In the light of this, it is possible to sympathise with the views of E. Holmes, committee member and later president of the club, who thought there was

> great and good cause for hope that Leicestershire in the not very distant future would establish itself as a good second rate county. He thought that it was a great mistake to think of Leicestershire taking the position of a first class county.[96]

His speech was not well received by the Leicester Town Cricket Club, but, with hindsight, it seems an astute assessment of the club's position. Failing most seasons to provide a first rate side, the club could expect good gates only for matches against tourists. As in football, poor results were not good for attracting crowds. At the same time cricket, with its rigid social distinction between gentlemen and players and between members and non-members, had little chance of attaining a central place in working-class culture. The contradiction between the social status which the club sought to cultivate and the demands of sporting

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96. LDP 1.12.83.

excellence which could alone bring in large crowds was perhaps most apparent in 1907 when Sir Arthur Hazlerigg was made captain, a man who, it was noted in Gardner's First Class Cricket, had not played a first-class match and was not even in his school XI or a university trial.[97]

Faced with the high cost of first-class cricket, the Leicestershire CCC tried to survive without dependable subsidy from the wealthy nor a large-scale working-class following. It could at times raise considerable sums for particular funds - the new ground in 1901, debt repayment in 1913 - and could call on help from other bodies with an interest in Leicester's sporting life such as the press, the rugby club and cinema and music hall companies.[98] But there seems little reason to see the decade before the war as a golden age.

With the decline of professional touring XIs, cricket appeared as a sport in which class-antagonisms had been effectively contained. Its lack of physical contact and its associations with the social relationships of an idealised rural society made it a possible meeting point for employers and employees, with firms, as providers of facilities, securely in charge. From the 1860s, cricket was promoted by some of Leicester's more established employers. The 17 founders of the LLCA included Walker and Kempson, Corah, Archibald Turner, Marshall and Co. and Eagle (the team of Rapp, Talbot and Co., elastic web manufacturers), as well as a Civil Service team. Donisthorpe formed a club in 1867, with AR Donisthorpe as president

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97. Brookes, op.cit. Even the Leicestershire CCC entry in Wisden, 1908, commented apologetically that 'In undertaking the leadership of first-class cricket, Sir Arthur Hazlerigg, to a large extent, disarmed criticism. A thorough sportsman, he did his best'. p.230.

98. Leics. County Cricket Club Annual Report 1913.

and Alfred Donisthorpe among the members. Its 6d monthly subscription would have allowed working men to join, although it is not clear from which parts of the firm players were drawn. Some employers were actively involved in the advancement of the game. Both Cooper and Corah were active supporters of Leicester cricket as well as their works team, while Dan Garner, a patron of LCCC, gave jobs in his shoe factory to county professionals as well as running a firm's club. Garner had played for the North Club and at the Wharf Street ground, and it is possible that much of the enthusiasm behind such teams came from employers who had been players. Many accounts of firms' outings report informal cricket among employees. The belief that cricket was a rational recreation, free from the taint of gambling, no doubt lay behind such encouragement, but J. Lawford, chairman of the Leicester Banks Cricket Club went further, relating cricket to the need for recuperation amongst bank clerks.[99] Speakers at the annual dinners which were themselves an important part of the culture of local cricket, were often ready to have recourse to the 'Vita Lampardi' strain of justification of the sport.

There are signs, though, that not all of the town's middle class was convinced of the value of the game. J.T. Hincks at the annual meeting of the LCCA in 1903 regretted that more members of the Town Council were not present, and thought their absence was due to 'the peculiar idea existing in some circles that young men could not enjoy themselves in games without betting and gambling ...'.[100]

Local cricket continued its expansion until the First World War, although there were signs of faltering in 1913 when some prominent local

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99. ibid. LC 25.1.73; 28.3.68. Shirley Ellis, op.cit., p.82. LG 16.12.99. LDP 27.10.83.

100. LDP 1.12.1903.

teams dissolved.[101] As the number of teams increased, so did the number of league competitions and, as in football, friendly fixtures declined in significance, with the exception of major established matches such as that between Leicester Town and Leicester Ivanhoe. The Leicester Challenge Cup was founded in 1880, the Leicester Town league in 1896 and the Leicester and District Mutual Sunday Schools Cricket League in 1898. Meanwhile, a nonconformist cricket association was formed in 1886 to promote cricket among dissenters.[102] Pressure on facilities grew as well. G.E. Rudd, chairman of Leicester Ivanhoe, complained in 1893 that 'Matters were now being made uncomfortable on the Victoria Park by the number of new clubs that were springing up in the town ...'. Games frequently interfered with one another and there were injuries to fielders from balls from other games. The better-off clubs looked for grounds elsewhere.[103]

Both in the enthusiasm of hundreds if not thousands of players, and in the sizeable crowds who gathered when it was rumoured that a professional would be playing or on the occasion of crucial matches, Victoria Park cricket seems to have had a more vital role in the popular culture of the town than most of the activities of the county club.

## V. Football

### a. Origins of the game in Leicester.

With the exception of the ball thrown into the air to signal the commencement of the Whipping Toms in 1849, no references to early

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101. LDP 12.5.1913. Alfred E. Knight thought that the middle class was turning to tennis and golf which would 'turn virile youth into ... Mary Anns'.

102. LDP 27.7.1903. On Leicester Ivanhoe see J.R. Gimson, et.al., The Leicester ivanhoe Cricket Club (Leicester 1923). Leicester Cricket Association op.cit. Wright's Directory 1898, pp. 328-9.

103. LDP 15.4.93; 20.4.1903 reports 30 games on a Saturday afternoon.

forms of football have been uncovered by the present study. While such a silence cannot form the basis of any firm conclusions, it suggests that there was little popular interest in football before the spread of the modern form of the game in the last decades of the century. The lack of newspaper references is not surprising, given the fragmentary coverage of sport before the 1880s, but that Dare does not mention football, if only to condemn it, seems a significant silence. Whatever informal football there may have been, there was certainly nothing to compare with the Derby football match.

Rough estimates of the numbers of football teams in the town show a limited interest in the 1870s and 1880s and a rapid rise in the game's following in the early 1890s, a trend which is borne out by literary evidence. Reports of matches in 1873 and 1883 suggest that the middle class dominated football in its early years in Leicester. Leicester Athletic Society FC was formed by the Leicester Athletic Society (f.1868), itself patronised by leading Leicester gentry and townsmen. Private school teams, such as Field House, Wyggeston School, Leicester Grammar School, Stoneygate School and Mr. Gardner's School all played on the Race Course and the pasture. Both rugby and association codes were used, although the former seems to have been preferred. Games of the Leicester Athletic Society Football Club could attract what were described as large attendances (no figures were given), but the sport remained informally organised. A match between St. Margaret's Football Club and Field House School was stopped when the ball burst, and plans were made to continue it the following week. This suggests both a lack of regular fixtures and low expenditure on equipment.[104]

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104. LC 15.3.73.

Tischler quotes the Birmingham Daily Mail from 1880 to the effect that association football had increased in size rapidly over the previous few years. In Leicester, similar expansion occurred a decade later. The Leicester Daily Post commented in 1887 that 'It is in the association game that the more rapid progress has been manifested. Where one club existed a year ago, there are now a dozen or more'.[105] At the time of the formation of the Fosse Club in 1884, there were only three other clubs playing association football in Leicester. In 1889, its first year, the Leicestershire FA had 17 affiliated teams.[106] Four years later, the extent of playing and watching both rugby and soccer had grown to such an extent that the LDP could observe that

> in no other town in England, perhaps, has its rapid growth been better attested than that of recent years in Leicester. Why, it seems to me but yesterday that scarcely 500 people could be got together to see a good match "free, gratis and for nothing". Now what do we find? Why five or six thousand people on each of two football grounds on the same afternoon, freely paying admission money.[107]

In an end-of-year survey of the social life of the town, the paper noted that

> Only a few years ago [football] was nowhere as compared with cycling. Already, however, the once sensational contests on the cinder track have become a faded memory, while Association and rugby Football has the field ...[108]

It was observed that the result of the Fosse v Loughborough cup match was awaited in Leicester with 'an excitement paralleled only by the now half-forgotten ties for the 20 miles bicycle championship'.[109]

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105. Tarbolton, p.37; LDP quoted in Thomas Sidney Finney, 'The Life and Times of Leicester Fosse Football Club' (MS, Leicester Reference Library, 1966).

106. Tarbolton, op.cit., p.4; LC 4.5.89.

107. LDP 6.3.93.

108. LDP 29.12.93.

109. LDP 18.12.93.

As a winter game, football did not compete directly with cycling for spectators, but it is quite clear that football, rather than cricket, replaced cycling as the town's major spectator sport. There is no specific evidence suggesting why this shift should have taken place. Football was growing rapidly in popularity nationally, in terms of the number of teams in existence, and the formation of the Football League both reflected the perception by leading clubs of a large potential audience, and stimulated interest in the game. Increasing press coverage, including regular match reports in the LDP from 1887 similarly fed on and stimulated this boom in the sport. Within a national context of rapid growth, publicised by national and local press, local factors may have been particularly conducive to the establishment of a wider base for football in Leicester. Cycling had certainly declined for internal reasons, but it is plausible to link changing spectator preferences to shifts in work patterns, notably the move to indoor working in the shoe industry which had begun in the late 1880s but was intensified by the 1892 indoor working agreement and the outcome of the 1895 dispute. It is difficult to make any precise links between working hours and spectator sport since the occupational structure of the crowd is not known. It is possible to conclude that changes in work patterns in the 1880s and 1890s in the shoe industry were conducive to the growth of sports which required regular attendance on Saturday afternoons, but there is no necessary connection between the two.

Lists of team names give only a vague impression of the types of organisations which were forming teams, the more so since what started as Sunday school teams could rapidly change in character as football took priority over religious observance as a motive for membership.

A team named after a street or area need not be made up of players exclusively for that street, and teams named after firms may or may not have had the firm's support. Nevertheless, table 6.7 suggests a significant role for religious organisations, especially Anglican ones, in the formation of football teams in the late 1880s and 1890s. This accords with the view that Anglican clergy were instrumental in propagating university sports among the working class, although the development in Leicester is later than that observed elsewhere.

Table 6.7

Origins of Leicester football teams, as suggested by name of clubs, 1893.

| | |
|---|---|
| Religious organisation | 16 |
| (Church of England) | (11) |
| (Nonconformist) | (3) |
| (YMCA) | (2) |
| Works | 2 |
| Street/neighbourhood | 10 |
| Other | 7 |
| TOTAL | 35 |

b. Leicester Fosse FC

Amateur football grew in Leicester throughout the period, and by 1903 the Leicestershire Football Association (LFA) had 124 clubs and 2,908 affiliated players. Assuming clubs in town and county had similar numbers of members, use of the figures in table 6.4 suggests over 1,700 affiliated players in the town, rising to 2,500 (other things being equal) in 1913. This excludes schoolboy football, to cater for which in elementary schools the Scholastic Association League was formed in 1893. This impressive growth took place in the context of the bureaucratic control of the LFA which sought to regulate players' behaviour

and establish regular fixtures. The former goal seems on the whole to have been successful. The press carried few reports of player misconduct, and very few in Leicester itself. In 1903, the LFA commented on the very good behaviour exhibited in Leicester league football, although the chairman, Morley, hoped that bad language could be stamped out.[110] The LFA's main effect on the structure of the game was in the creation of leagues for all levels of local football. In part, this had as its aim the need to regulate fixtures, but it was defended too in terms of the demand of footballers for competition. T.A. Angrave spoke in 1893 in favour of a county league since 'It was a well established fact that the league principle was the one that created the greatest interest in football and consequently the greatest rivalry'. At the same LFA meeting, the chairman of the Fosse Club, Ashwell, claimed that 'The interest in friendly matches seemed to have about disappeared'.[111]

There is unfortunately no evidence of the views of local players on the question. The transition from friendly to wholly competitive football is often viewed as a sign of the permeation of the sport by working-class values, but there is no evidence here for or against working-class participation in league football. There is at any rate no evidence that leagues hindered the growing popularity of the sport, and in 1903 the LFA formed the Leicester Minor League, taking in lesser clubs which had previously remained outside its aegis. The same year saw the affiliation of the Sunday School Mutual League to the LFA, marking the end of the

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110. LDP 11.6.1903; 18.9.93. There is no mention of football in Education Committee and School Board minutes. LDP 20.5.1903; 29.1.1903.

111. LDP 4.2.93.

attempt by religious organisations to maintain administrative control over the sport played by their teams.[112]

For all this rapid growth of football as a participation sport, press attention at the time and the attention of historians since was focussed on the activities of the town's leading club, Leicester Fosse. This perspective is only partly justified by the numbers of people involved - Fosse's crowds were not always greater than the number of affiliated players, and park games could attract crowds too. Nevertheless, despite the refusal of Fosse and Loughborough to play an active part in the LFA from the time of its establishment, they were viewed as the top of a continuous scale of footballing excellence, at least by the press. They generated town-wide interest, serving as a common subject of conversation. When successful, the team could exert a cultural influence which cannot be measured simply in terms of numbers of spectators at specific matches.

For most of its existence, Leicester Fosse was a second division team with limited success. Formed in 1884, the club joined the Midland League in 1891-2 and the Football League in 1894-5. In 1898 it became a limited liability company. Re-election was sought in 1903-4, but the team was promoted in 1907-8, only to be relegated the following season. The club was successful in neither financial nor sporting terms for the rest of its career, and was wound up in 1919 after a public meeting was held at which Leicester City FC was formed as a successor organisation. The club acquired the present Filbert Street site for its ground in 1893-4 after playing at a field off the Fosse Road (1884-5)

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112. LDP 24.1.1903; 11.6.1903.

Victoria Park (1885-6), the Belgrave Road Grounds (1886-8), a site belonging to the council off Mill Lane (1889-93) and, briefly, at the Aylestone Park Grounds (1893).

The club was founded by Old Wyggestonians, mostly from Emanuel Church bible class, most of whom lived on or near the prosperous Fosse Road on the west side of the town. According to reminiscences quoted by Tarbolton, the club comprised members of varying social origin, including bricklayers, clerks, clickers, labourers, students and the sons of manufacturers. The 9d membership was low enough not to be a deterrent. Identification of committee members from directories proved difficult, presumably due to the fact that many were young, still in parents' households, and so not listed. In the phase before the limited company was formed in 1898, the club was run by a small committee (4 in 1884, 7 in 1891) which included some members with connections among boot manufacturers. One family, the Johnsons, provided several members of the club and committee, as well as the financial help necessary to acquire the Filbert Street ground. Joseph Johnson, chairman in 1891, was a boot manufacturer.[113]

The club soon acquired influential vice-presidents and patrons. Sir Thomas Wright became president in 1889-90, James Whitehead, John Dove Harris, T.A. Angrave, J.H. Cooper, J.T. Hincks and the Rev. H.J. Fortescue, vicar of St. George's. By that time, F. Ashwell, a mechanical engineer and owner of an iron foundry, had become president.[114] In

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113. Tarbolton, op.cit; Wright's Directory 1884, 1892. On Leicester Fosse's ground arrangements, see also Simon Inglis, The Football Grounds of England and Wales (1983), pp. 124-5.

114. Tarbolton, op.cit., p.25.

the range of occupations and social status, this list is comparable to the proprietorship of the cricket ground company, representing a number of the town's elite families for industry and the professions.

By 1892, the club had outgrown its original purpose and was the town's premier club, second only to Loughborough Swifts in the county. It had acquired its first professional in 1888-9 (Harry Webb of Stafford Rangers), entered the FA Cup in 1890-91 and joined the Midland League. The size of its budget, although small by later standards, had exceeded that which it had had when still just another local club several times over (see table 6.8). Existing structures and committee members proved unequal to the increasing responsibilities placed on them, and a general meeting was held in the Co-operative Hall to raise funds and elect a new committee. It was resolved that 'it is desirable to raise a fund for the improvement of association football in Leicester and to help the Fosse FC bring it about'. £200 was subsequently raised, and a new committee formed. Ashwell became chairman as well as president and T. Seddon, a shoe manufacturer, became hon. treasurer. While an auctioneer, J.J. Curtis, was made vice-president, there is no sign that the old vice-presidential structure was maintained. As the club was put on a sounder business footing, necessary to sustain it in the Midland League and in its efforts to join the football league, the elite vice-presidential group withdrew its support from a club which no longer had as its aim the promotion of amateur sport in Leicester. In 1897, members of the new committee, including Seddon and with the addition of Leicester Tory MP, Sir John Rolleston, formed a limited liability company to manage the club's affairs, pursuing to its logical conclusion the decision of the 1892 meeting.[115]

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115. LDP 18.3.92; 16.8.93; PRO BT31/15835/53988. Cf. the development of Reading FC, Yeo 1976, pp. 188-196.

Table 6.8

Leicester Fosse FC Balance Sheets

(to nearest £1)

| | EXP | | | I/C | | Profit/ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Season | Players | Total | Gate | Season | Total | Loss | Balance |
| 1884-5 | | 1 | | | 2 | +1 | nd |
| 1885-6 | | | | | | 0 | nd |
| 1886-7 | | | | | | +2 | nd |
| 1887-8 | | 33 | | | 35 | +2 | +3 |
| 1888-9 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1889-90 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1890-91 | | 319 | | | 334 | +15 | +222 |
| 1891-92 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1892-93 | | | | | | +12 | nd |
| 1893-94 | | 3,093 | | | 2,908 | -185 | nd |
| 1894-5 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1895-6 | | | | | 2,600 | nd | -458 |
| 1896-7 | | | | | 3,114 | nd | -500 |
| 1897-8 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1898-99 | | 4,530 | | | 4,341 | -189 | nd |
| 1899-1900 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1900-01 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1901-2 | | 2,633 | | | 2,612 | +13 | -1,001 |
| 1902-3 | | 2,512 | | | 2,618 | +106 | -885 |
| 1903-4 | | | | | | nd | -1,450 |
| 1904-5 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1905-6 | | | | | | nd | nd |
| 1906-7 | | 4,193 | | | 5,360 | +1,167 | nd |
| 1907-8 | 3,669 | 5,849 | 5,153 | 1,167 | 6,431 | +582 | -5,000 |
| 1908-9 | | 8.730 | | | 7,733 | -997 | nd |
| 1909-10 | | | | | | -1,102 | nd |
| 1910-11 | | | | | | -921 | -4,084 |
| 1911-12 | 4,110 | 6,955 | 4,148 | 616 | 5,042 | -1,913 | nd |
| 1912-13 | 3,414 | 6,199 | 3,734 | 752 | 5,565 | -634 | nd |

Sources: LDP
Finney, op.cit.
PRO BT31

Well before the club had become a limited liability company, there were signs that it was no longer one in which there was day to day control of its affairs by the members. The increase in the number of members from 40 in 1887 to 236 in 1892 and 840 in 1893 indicates that, as the club's standard of play improved club membership became divorced from actually playing for the team. As 'Observer' noted in

his column in the LDP, by 1893 the club was 'a semi-business concern' which he attributed to 'the irresistable tide of public demand' which had transformed the club. The large club could no longer respond to members' demands, indeed it is unlikely that it wished to do so. A meeting held in August 1893, 'with the desire of open co-operation' held at the Co-operative hall to discuss football matters seems to have elicited little real contribution from the floor. The committee were said to be 'most anxious to take all the members into their confidence as far as possible', but the divide was already deep, and the members were in reality little more involved in running the club than were the crowd.[116] Both were perceived as sources of funds rather than of players or administrators. Thus when Ashwell, anxious to bring Football League football to Leicester, addressed the crowd after a match with Gainsborough Trinity, he told them that

> It rested with them ... as to the progress made in the future, as an improvement in the team could only be brought about by the interest shown by the spectators by their regularly attending matches, and urging their friends to do likewise.[117]

Ashwell and the committee were in effect asking the crowd to generate revenue which they, the committee, could use to ends of their own choice. As the club had sought to achieve success in local and regional fixtures, the FA Cup and the Midland League, and now looked for membership of the Football League, the demands of running a professional team, and the financial commitment implicit in guarantee matches, favoured the

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116. Tarbolton, op.cit., p.9; LDP 31.8.93; 4.9.93; 31.8.93.

117. LDP 20.2.93.

domination of businessmen in the club's affairs. But it was only in a limited way an exclusion of working-class participation in club affairs as people of similar social rank had always dominated. The paternalism of the vice-presidential elite, rather than working-class localism, was excluded by the club's increasingly commercial orientation.

The motives of directors have been discussed by several writers. Tischler's view is that the creation of joint stock companies and of the Football League were part of a process by which football became a model capitalist industry, with clubs run as businesses. Despite the limit of dividends to 5% by League regulations, the principal motive of directors was financial. In this view,

> by the 1880s, well-financed football clubs replicated and normalised contemporary commercial-societal relationships and offered controlled sporting entertainment to paying spectators ...[118]

According to Tischler, the 5% limit could in any case be avoided, and directors were able to profit from contracts to supply provisions and services. Other historians have questioned such an interpretation. While examples of profiteering have been identified, it seems doubtful if it can have been a principal motive. Only the most successful clubs were likely to be anything other than a very unattractive outlet for venture capital, and local businessmen could have found much better investment opportunities elsewhere. Directorship could involve time-consuming work at a time when there were rarely managers in the modern sense.[119] As Korr writes of West Ham,

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118. Tischler, op.cit., p.35.

119. On the role of the modern manager, see Steve Wagg, The Football World (Brighton 1984).

> The club was guided firmly by members of the local business and professional class who were willing to invest some money as well as a lot of time. The Directors' job had turned into a civic responsibility.

Dunning sees the motivation of directors as in part financial, but also directed at social control and influence within the community. Nor does he discount individuals' love for the game.[120]

Analysis of the Leicester Fosse directorship gives little support to Tischler's view. The club was rarely profitable, and the danger of loss may have been responsible for the complete change of directors between 1897 and 1901, and the high turnover of directors up to 1913. (See Appendices IV and V and table 6.9). It seems unlikely, given the club's record, that new directors could have hoped for anything more than financial stability, and, failing to find it, they got out quickly. According to one director, speaking in 1908, it was only the sacrifices of the directors which had saved the club from dissolution in 1902.[121]

It is more difficult to be specific about other motives. Directors did not have links with the old club at committee level, although they could have been members of it. No information survives to confirm this. The rhetoric of football directorship emphasised love of the game and civic pride. On the occasion of promotion in 1908, the directors' report stated that

> For many years the honour has been striven for, and it is gratifying to realise that at last the town of Leicester has been placed on an equal footing to the best clubs in the kingdom.

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120. Charles P. Korr, 'West Ham Utd FC ...', Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 13, 1978. Eric Dunning, Soccer: the social origins of the sport and its development as a spectacle and profession (SSRC 1979); Mason, op.cit., ch. 2.

121. LDP 9.5.1908.

Table 6.9

Leicester Fosse FC Shareholding 1898-1917

| i | | % 1898 | | 1908 | | 1917 | | Directors 1901-13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation | Manuf. | 16.3 | 20 | 14.1 | 22 | 9.9 | 30 | 28.6 |
| | shoes | 3 | | 5 | | 6 | | |
| | builders | 5 | | 8 | | 10 | | |
| | Prof. & Man. | 13.8 | 17 | 10.3 | 16 | 4.3 | 13 | 14.3 |
| | Merchants | 4.1 | 5 | 6.4 | 10 | 5.6 | 17 | 14.3 |
| | Shopkeepers, dealers, drink trade | 10.6 | 13 | 14.1 | 22 | 15.2 | 46 | 4.8 |
| | drink trade | | 2 | | 6 | | 17 | |
| | Clerks, foremen, trades | 22.0 | 27 | 22.4 | 35 | 39.9 | 121 | 33.3 |
| | Clerks | | (13) | | (16) | 54 | | |
| | agents | | (6) | | (7) | 47 | | |
| | Manual | 26.0 | 32 | 25.0 | 39 | 15 | 46 | 4.8 |
| | shoe trade | | 13 | | 17 | | 16 | |
| | bdg. | | 8 | | 10 | | 10 | |
| | Women | 0 | - | 0.6 | 1 | 1.3 | 4 | - |
| | 'gents' | 6.5 | 8 | 3.8 | 6 | 6.3 | 19 | - |
| | Misc. | 0.8 | 1 | 3.2 | 5 | 2.3 | 7 | - |
| | TOTAL | 100.1 | 123 | 99.9 | 156 | 99.8 | 303 | 101.1 |
| ii Distribution | 1 )1-10 | 38) | 110 | 58) | 140 | 131) | 280 | |
| | 2-10 ) | 73) | | 82) | | 149) | | |
| | 11-20 | | 2 | | 6 | | 7 | |
| | 21-30 | | 6 | | 5 | | 10 | |
| | 31-40 | | 1 | | 2 | | 2 | |
| | 41-50 | | 2 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| | 50 | | 3 | | 3 | | 4 | |
| | | | 124 | | 158 | | 304 | |
| iii Residence | Non-Leic. res: Leics. | | 7 | | 7 | | 19 | |
| | Total | | 7 | | 12 | | 23 | |
| IV Concentration of Shareholding | Held by those > 30 | 48.2 | 565 | 44.8 | 598 | 34.4 | 654 | |
| | Total | | 1173 | | 1336 | | 1901 | |

At a celebratory dinner, William Squires drew attention to the benefits which the club could bring to the town, remarking that he felt sure that traders would realise that business would increase.[122] But it is impossible to penetrate such image-building.

The issue of promotion itself throws some light on directors' motives. The demands of first division football required higher expenditure on players' wages and involvement in the transfer market, although returns could be correspondingly higher if the team played well. Table 6.8 suggests that Leicester Fosse exchanged a relatively good financial position in Division II for a bad one in Division I, due largely to their bad form, blamed by directors and the press on inability to afford a good enough team after an unsuccessful public appeal for funds in the summer of 1908.[123] The directors may have believed that first division football would be more profitable, but consideration of relative costs should have urged caution. That the directors tried to rely on public subscription rather than their own capital suggests either the most cynical manipulation, or the wish to manage a civic triumph from which they can have expected little return. The latter seems more likely.

The social composition of the directorate is quite distinctive, more similar to that of the Belgrave Ground Co. than any other considered here. Compared with Mason's sample of 46 football clubs, there are significantly more manufacturers but fewer from the wholesale and retain sector. Most striking is the single example of a licensed victualler on the board. Lower middle class elements are represented almost in

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122. BT 31 loc cit; annual report 1907-8. LDP 9.5.1908.

123. LDP 28.4.1908; 9.5.1908.

proportion to their shareholding but, as may be expected, there is only a single case of a manual occupation (a plumber, who could have been a small employer). Apart from the publican and those in the building trade, it is not easy to identify specific trade interests which might be fulfilled by directors' influence on the distribution of contracts.

The manufacturers are not of the elite group which dominated the vice-presidency of the old club. Rather, they belong to the lesser bourgeoisie. Involvement with the football club may have offered an opportunity to participate in munificence in the absence of upper middle class interest. Apart from Orson Wright (director 1904-9), these men were not prominent in municipal politics, so directorship of the club allowed them a public role otherwise denied to them. This is the more so in the case of the clerks and agents on the board.

Much the same may be said of the motives of shareholders. The great majority of shareholdings were of ten or less, and about one third of shareholders held the minimum of a single £1 share. This suggests a wish to support the club in a modest way rather than to use it as a source of profitable investment. The concentration of shares declined between 1898 and 1917 due to sales of new shares in small lots in order to raise fund. Holders of large numbers of shares, which included several directors, can have had little hope of profitable return, yet they tended to keep their shares. Shareholders in the club included more members of the lower middle class than the directorate, and a significant, though relatively declining, working class presence (26% in 1898). This presence is suggestive of genuine interest in the club's welfare, but does not make the club a 'working-class organisation' in Taylor's sense.[124]

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124. Ian Taylor, 'Soccer consciousness and soccer hooliganism' in Stan Cohen (ed.), Images of Deviance (1971).

The 26% of shareholders in 1898 represents the peak of potential working-class influence in the club's existence, but there is no indication that it was utilised in order to change club policy or to elect working-class directors. Leicester Fosse FC had a less elite-dominated social profile than the cricket ground company or the county cricket club, but it was the lower middle class, not the working class, which dominated shareholding, and lesser manufacturers, managers and professionals who dominated both the old club committee and the board of the company. In so far as this had any significance for class relations in Leicester, it is to be seen in relation to the dynamics of a highly differentiated middle class, with lesser middle class elements asserting their role in the development of popular culture against the urban elite and the working class which constituted the bulk of the potential audience.

c. The Crowd

Some indication of the growth of popularity of football as a spectator sport in Leicester may be gained from crowd figures reported in the press. These are of doubtful accuracy, in the absence of turnstiles, and only appeared intermittently, especially for very large or unusually small crowds. A salutary reminder of the vagaries of such statistics is given in the Leicester Daily Post, remarking on the great increase of crowd size in 1893, but noting that

> Actual figures are difficult to obtain. No official returns are offered to the Press, and there is no reason why reporters should go down on their knees to beg for them...[125]

All press statements were therefore probably journalists' estimates.

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125. LDP 13.1.93.

The figures suggest a rapid growth of interest in the early 1890s, before league membership, and especially for matches with other midland teams, particularly Loughborough. While 3,000 was considered a big turn out for a game against Derby in 1890-91, over 10,000 watched a match against Loughborough in 1893, despite raising of prices. In April of the same year, 13,000 watched Fosse play the same opponents. 3,000 turned out for a Monday match against WBA starting at 5.10, despite the interference with working hours. While larger crowds attended on occasions later, especially in the promotion year, when 18,000 watched the Christmas Day match against Oldham Athletic, the poor form of the team meant that five-figure crowds became exceptional, despite league membership. Less than 1,500 watched a game against Blackpool in March 1902, and by 1899, the crowd of 12,000 for a cup match against Sheffield Wednesday could be described as 'a rare sight'. In 1903, a crowd of 11,000 led a reporter to lament that it 'called back to memory some of the days of the past'.[126] He was nostalgic about events which were less than a decade old.

The Leicester football crowd rapidly became very discerning about what it would pay to see. Occasional large crowds show that there was considerable interest in successful football, but most of what was offered was not good. The 'cheap team' policy, by which the committee sought to recover its debts in 1902-3 led to very poor gates, and hostile press coverage. Yet the achievement of promotion in 1908 was accompanied

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126. LDP 20.3.92; 9.10.93; 5.9.93; 27.11.99; 28.12.1903.

by big crowds in the latter part of the season, although the promotion run started too late to be of maximum financial benefit to the club.[127]

The crowd's loyalty was thus highly conditional, and belies notions that 'traditional' football crowds identified with their local team come what may. It is true that large attendances could be achieved at practices, but admission to these was free, and an attractive spectacle in a town where there was high unemployment and much short-time working after 1890. Reports of the reception accorded players on promotion are indicative of a capacity for extraordinary mass public celebration, but remain exceptional.[128] The LDP commented on the crowd which gathered at the station and filled the streets back to the Grand Hotel in the middle of town that 'To find a parallel to the scene of last night ... one would have to go back to the days of the Boer War ...'. The team was met with music from a brass band, which played 'See the conquering hero comes' as they drove along the London Road, a detail which recalls the feting of cycling champions 20 years previously. The LDP remarked that

> Good humour ... prevailed, and although there was not lacking the roughness which is always in evidence in large crowds, no accident of a serious nature resulted.

The good humour of the crowd on this occasion contrasts with wider fears of crowds at the time, and also with prevalent notions of the conduct

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127. LDP 23.3.1903; 9.5.1908.

128. LDP 17.8.1903; 25.8.1913. Tischler op.cit., p.123 sees such crowd behaviour as normal in the 1880s, and considers that a sign that such crowds were no longer seen as a threat to public order. But cf. Leicester riots and demonstrations in 1886 (hosiery dispute), 1895 (shoe trade dispute) and 1905 (unemployment demonstrations).

of football crowds. The issue of crowd behaviour in the period before 1914 has been raised by Dunning et.al., and their work is of particular interest here since much of their study is based on reports of crowd behaviour in the Leicester Daily Mercury and in FA reports. Dunning claims, on the basis of the number of cases reported in each source, that the level of football violence in the period was high and not confined to crowds at professional matches. Football, then, as now, provided an opportunity for 'the expression of the norms of "violent" or "aggressive" masculinity'. Such aggression, it is claimed, was the more to be expected at that time since 'the conditions of working-class life generally in that period approximated closely in many ways to those restricted nowadays to the "rough" working class'. Such violence was largely directed against referees, players and opposing fans, not among groups of supporters on one's own side from other parts of the town. Dunning's conclusion is that

> we have established, pace Mason, that spectator misconduct and disorderliness was a recurrent and relatively frequent feature of Association Football in the three and a half decades before the first world war.[129]

Mason does not deny that there were disturbances, but maintains that they were irregular, easily contained, and due to specific causes arising within the stadium - bad refereeing, foul play, overcrowding or the refusal of authorities to allow a match to proceed. Even conflicts between rival groups of supporters usually followed such incidents.[130]

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129. Eric Dunning and Pat Murray, 'Working class social bonding and the sociogenesis of football hooliganism', SSRC end of grant report 1982 (xerox), pp.4, 70, 66.

130. Mason, op.cit., pp.159 et.seq.

There is little in Mason's account to suggest that football violence was expressive of the aggressive culture of the working class, but rather that it was generated wholly within the game itself, by the interaction between events on and around the field and established notions of what it was reasonable to expect in the game.

The Leicester evidence seems to give inadequate support to Dunning's hypothesis, and Dunning's approach does not support his contention that the study 'eschews ... forms of social analysis that rely on speculative history ...'[131] not least because the link between football violence and a rough working class culture remains itself wholly speculative in the absence of precise information of the social composition of the Leicester football crowd, other than that it was largely working class.[132] Much of Dunning's case is based upon the identification of 59 incidents of football violence in 21 years play in Leicestershire, which includes 18 cases of bad language by the crowd, not physical violence. (See tables 6.10 and 6.11). While there must have been under-reporting, it is impossible to make any statement about its extent. Dunning relies on the converse effect to deviency amplification: since football was not thought to be associated with violence, newspaper reporters gave incidents a low priority in their reports. But there is no evidence

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131. Dunning, op.cit., p.70.

132. There are occasional general descriptions of the football crowd in the press, e.g.
i) 'it is noticeable that in the crowd which collects weekly at the Welford Road ground during the winter there is always a good sprinkling of ladies, and the two huge stands are increasingly filled with football enthusiasts of all classes, as compared with assemblies at the Filbert Street enclosure'. LDP 26.3.1913.
ii). 'There was a lot of prejudice against soccer, Rugger was thought to be a game for the classes, the other for the masses' 'an old Leicester sportsman' quoted in LM 7.9.27.

Table 6.10

Reports of disorderliness at football matches in Leicestershire 1894-1914.

| | Filbert St. | Other | | Filbert St. | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1894 | 3 | 1 | 1905 | 1 | 1 |
| 95 | 2 | - | 06 | - | - |
| 96 | - | 2 | 07 | - | - |
| 97 | 1 | 2 | 08 | - | 4 |
| 98 | - | 1 | 09 | - | 1 |
| 99 | 2 | 5 | 1910 | 1 | 4 |
| 1900 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 3 | 1 |
| 01 | - | - | 12 | 1 | 4 |
| 02 | - | 3 | 13 | 2 | 5 |
| 03 | 2 | 3 | 14 | - | 1 |
| 04 - | - | | | | |
| | | | | 20 | 39 |

Source: Dunning etc.al. (1982).

Table 6.11

Categories of Violent Incident in Leicestershire Football

| | 1894-1900 | 1901-07 | 1908-14 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal | 10 | - | 8 | 18 |
| pitch invasion | 3 | 1 | 15 | 19 |
| assault | 8 | 4 | 4 | 16 |
| ambiguous | 4 | 5 | 2 | 11 |
| | 25 | 10 | 29 | 64 |

Source: Dunning (1983) p.32.

either way, other than a number of cases reported by referees to the FA but not mentioned in the press, and vice versa, but these are insufficient to demonstrate massive under-reporting. It seems more reasonable to believe that the number of cases was small, especially in relation to the number of matches played. Assuming 20 matches per team per season, all against other Leicester teams, the total number of matches per annum would be as in Table 6.12.

Table 6.12

| | No. teams | Estimated No. Matches | No. incidents |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1893 | 45 | 450 | 4 (1894) |
| 1903 | 74 | 740 | 5 |
| 1913 | 108 | 1080 | 7 |

This seems a very low level of crowd disturbance. At Filbert Street, no incidents at all were reported in ten out of 21 years, and only in 1894 and 1911 did the total reach three.

Dunning pays little attention to changing definitions of incidents. The railing in of pitches made a crucial difference to the implications of pitch invasion and other encroachments by the crowd. In 1903, for example, the goalkeeper of the De Montford club was cautioned by the LFA for interfering with spectators, and claimed in his defence that they had encroached on the goal line and that he had pushed them back. Such an incident would be unlikely on an enclosed pitch, but of course few local clubs had railings. The Fosse club did not rail in its ground completely until 1903. The decision to do so followed an incident which demonstrates Mason's contention that spectator unrest was generally provoked by incidents on the pitch. In a match between Fosse Reserves and Whitwick White Cross FA, a new player, on loan from a local club,

had his collar bone broken during a challenge by a Whitwick player, hardy. Much bad language followed from the crowd, and after the game, Hardy was mobbed on his way to the dressing room. The crowd were urged on by remarks made by a Leicester Fosse director, Collins, which the subsequent FA report found 'improper and calculated to increase the excitement of the spectators who were near him at the time ...'.[133] As a result of the enquiry, a gangway was built to separate players from the crowd more effectively.

The incident is of further interest in that the FA commission met in response to a report submitted by the Rev. J.W.A. Mackenzie, hon. treasurer of the LFA and vicar of Whitwick, not about foul play or mobbing, but about 'the attitude of spectators' and specifically their bad language. Like other middle class supporters of football, Mackenzie was highly sensitive to bad language at football matches, and in public places generally. He said at a presentation of a cup in January 1903 that officials should be encouraged to stamp out 'coarse and objectionable language' from players and spectators alike, adding that

> Those who used such language were never the spectators that supported the club in any way at all, and often these who would be a help and real friends were kept away from the field in consequence of it.

This is evidence of conflicting views of acceptable public behaviour, which could be seen in terms of a rough/respectable divide, but it also shows the extreme sensitivity on the part of some middle class officials

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133. LDP 19.1.1903; 24.1.1903; 1.12.1902. The De Montford incident is not on Dunning's list.

to bad language. Such sensitivity is itself historically changeable. What weight can be put on the 18 cases of bad language identified by Dunning is thus difficult to assess.[134]

There are several reports of matches in which incidents occurred which may have been expected to provoke an habitually violent crowd but failed to do so, including violent play and a dubiously disallowed goal. Travelling supporters do not seem to have had a reputation for disorder either. The LDP's correspondent recalled on the occasion of excursionists returning from a match at Wellingborough in 1903 'the good old days when Fosse used to induce train loads of their supporters to accompany them when they went from home ...'.

We should nevertheless guard against too optimistic a view of crowd behaviour. Crowds were partisan, and went to see the home side win. When they weren't winning, many stayed away, and if the visitors went ahead, the reception was hostile. When Gainsborough Trinity took the lead in 1893,

> such an effect did this have on the spectators that the succeeding part of the game was carried on sub silentio, and it was not until the homesters commenced attacking again that renewed shouts of encouragement were indulged in.

But similar partiality could be found at the rugby ground too, as could abuse of referees. The temperance lobby was able to play on fears of disorder at football matches to persuade the council not to licence the ground. According to Sawday, a teetotal councillor, football was

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134. LDP 19.1.1903; 27.1.1903. For a further example, in which the crowd used bad language towards a visiting team (Doncaster Rovers) see LDP 20.11.93. In this case, the visitors had no change of strip and left the field five minutes after half time due to heavy snow, causing the termination of the game.

a game in which the utmost restraint was needed by players and spectators alike.[135]

d. Football - conclusion

It remains to assess how central the development of football was in the context of popular culture as a whole. Proponents of the game in its early days put forward rational recreationist views in support of it. J.T. Hincks, by his own account a member of the first football club in Leicester (presumably the LACFC) thought football provided an answer to the threat of declining vigour. He asked at the first LFA dinner 'did it not bring out in young men that pluck and grit which was the foundation of English manhood?' Religious organisations played an important part in the development of the sport, which they saw as a means of attaching young men and youths to their congregations. At a town-wide level, football services were started by the Church of England in 1891 at St. George's, and later at St. Martin's. Members of the Fosse and Tigers teams, as well as local team players, attended. The sermons suggest that churchmen were attempting to control the secularising tendency of the sport they had fostered, and texts emphasised the need for spiritual as well as physical exercise. At the 1891 service, the text was Timothy 14 v 7-8, 'Exercise thyself rather unto Godliness for bodily exercise profiteth little'. Three years later, the Bishop of Peterborough, Mandell Creighton, preached at the service, and explained that:

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135. LDP 31.11.1903; 18.12.1893; 16.11.1903; 30.2.1893; 2.11.1903: 'On Saturday the feeling displayed was regrettable especially in a certain quarter where level-headedness, at least, is expected.' LDP 29.9.1900. CM 1/33:25.9.1900. For a recent refutation of the arguments of Dunning et.al., Critcher and Taylor, see H.F. Moorhouse, 'Professional Football and working class culture: English theories and Scottish evidence', The Sociological Review vol. 32 no. 2, May 1984.

> just as their bodies needed refreshment on Saturdays after the monotony of the week's work, so did their souls need refreshment on Sundays; the training, the discipline, the recreation that was necessary for the health of their souls.[136]

The general cultural benefits of football were rarely advocated after the 1880s. Once established, especially in its commercial-professional form, its proponents spoke in terms of the benefit to trade and civic identity, rather than its effects on working-class recreation. To have done so may have reopened unwelcome debate. Criticism of betting on matches and the fear of crowd disorder, if exaggerated, would have done little for the image of a game which sought the donations and subscriptions of the respectable as well as a broad public at the gates. But ultimately, football was not a threat to public order or public morality before the war. Unlike racing, or even cycling, it avoided association with drink or, on a local level, extensive organised gambling, and took place within clearly defined areas at specific - and limited - times. The worst fear which it engendered was that it turned minds away from more important matters in the office or in civic duties. With the outbreak of war, the question appeared with heightened intensity in Leicester, which had very low recruitment rates. While the rugby club ceased playing at once, and 50 rugby players joined up as a patriotic gesture in August 1914, association football continued. Municipal leaders such as Hazlerigg blamed football for the slow rate of recruitment, while (Sir) Jonathan North made a more general criticism of Leicester's hedonism, lamenting in 1915 the continuation of 'Business as usual, pleasure as usual, racing as usual. Semper eadem, always the same, is a vicious programme'.[137]

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136. LC 4.5.89; 1891 Sermon quoted in Finney, op.cit., p.77, that of 1894 in Creighton, op.cit., p.116.

137. Armitage, op.cit., p.84.

Roy Hay has asked the question, with reference to Scotland, how important football can have been for working-class culture, specifically with relation to the social control argument, and concludes that even at its peak in the 1950s, it involved only 20% of males in big towns.[138] Such a crude statistical measure gives a distorded view. Consciousness of soccer went far beyond those who attended matches, involving those who played for local teams, or informally, those who read about it in the press, and those who discussed it in primary social groups. Nevertheless, its importance in Leicester before 1914 can be exaggerated. At times, football attracted very large crowds and much attention in the local press. But its salience was not always responsive to its changing fortunes. Professional football was successful in sporting terms only in the early 1890s and the mid 1900s, and a financial liability at all times. Crowds were often smaller than the rugby crowd, especially during the Tigers' rise to national prominence under Crumbie in the 1890s and 1900s. The weakness of Leicester Fosse FC suggests that, while it attracted a largely working class following, and had some working-class shareholders, it was always perceived as external to the Leicester working class. From its creation by Old Wyggestonians and its control by the Johnson family to the creation of the limited liability company, its leading figures were from the middle class, manufacturers, traders and white-collar workers. Working-class support depended on good football and success. It took the place of cycling as the town's major working-class spectator sport, but did not command unwavering support.

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138. Roy Hay, 'Soccer and social control in Scotland 1873-1978' in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds.), Sport, Money, Morality and the Media (Kensington, New South Wales, 1980).

Amateur football, on the other hand, grew throughout the period, although little can be said about its social constituency. It created increasing demand for playing space and created in the LFA an influential governing body. Yet the LFA itself seems to have been run by members of the middle class, and served to channel the sport into forms which were nationally dominant. Nor was there any sign of resistance to such a programme.

In the light of this, it is necessary to treat with caution statements such as that of Wagg that 'Right from the first, working-class supporters .... adopted the local team as an expression of their own territory ...'.[139] Like bad theatre and bad music hall, indifferent football held little attraction, territorial or otherwise for most working-class supporters, and the sense in which the team, or the sport itself, was somehow 'theirs' was always an ambivalent one.

vi. Conclusions

The evidence collected here suggests that, while we may agree that the last quarter of the 19th century saw the transformation of sport in Leicester from the primitive commercialism of the old cricket ground company to a more highly organised industry, in which organisations were enmeshed in complex business transactions, it remains singularly unprofitable. No Leicester company or club, with the exception of the rugby club, achieved long-term financial success, and several veered continuously towards dissolution, some achieving it. If this was an age of commercialised leisure, it was hardly a triumphant one. Indeed, sport continued throughout the period to consume rather than generate

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139. Wagg, op.cit., p.14.

capital for its promoters. Such financial benefits as accrued seem to have gone principally to players and manufacturers of sports equipment and clothing, the latter represented in Leicester by Corah, Walker and Kempson and a number of lesser cycle firms.

It is possible to see the development charted here in terms of the increasing domination of local sport by national forms and organisations. Cycling represents an intermediate phase, but after its demise, Leicester does not have a distinctive range of sports, nor was it more than a local centre of sports administration. But this domination was achieved not by the penetration of national capital into the local market for leisure, out-of-town organisations such as the Racecourse company and the Rink company being amongst the least successful of all. Rather, it was achieved by the affiliation of Leicester sports organisations to national bodies and acceptance of nationally accepted rules and bureaucratic forms of organisation. The relatively late rise of association football as a popular spectator and participation sport nevertheless suggests the survival of strong local preferences among the town's working class at least until the 1890s. The chronological coincidence of this with the final decline of workshop-based work organisation in the shoe trade may be a contributory factor, but there is no supporting evidence. External factors, such as developments in the press and the further growth of national sporting bodies, such as the Football League are also important here.

The changes which took place in sport in Leicester after 1850 do not seem to have been the focus of social conflict. Unregenerate popular sports declined tamely or were driven out of sight by policing and new bye-laws, yet the systematic denial of access to traditional

sites, notably the Pasture and Meadows, by park development was not blatantly challenged. It seems likely that some 'traditional' sports, such as ratting, were carried on until the end of the century, but became increasingly unrespectable, surviving chiefly in those parts of the working class where old forms of work organisation lasted longest. There was above all little attempt, outside the organised labour movement, with ventures such as the Clarion Club, to counter the dominance of the middle class in bureaucratic sporting organisations, whether in clubs or commercial ventures.

The dominant role of the middle class in the development of sport is a striking feature. Its aims were ideological rather than commercial. This was not a simple matter of exerting hegemonic control over the leisure of the working class, and owed much to rivalries within the middle class in efforts to be seen to be contributing to municipal well-being. Sport offered particular scope for the lesser bourgeoisie, and especially the lower middle class, to achieve public recognition and to seek to fashion the town's identity in their own image.

Their success was inhibited by the conditional nature of cultural authority. The new sports acquired bureaucratic forms such as leagues, and central bodies to arbitrate disputes and establish common practices, professionalism was severely restricted in major sports (racing excepted) and concerted efforts were made to exclude elements of old sporting culture, notably gambling and violence, which were contrary to bourgeois notions of thrift and public order. Sport was effectively excluded from the market, and became correspondingly more stable. The contrast between professional football, which, despite its financial position, survived the period, and professional cycling, which could not withstand

the vicissitudes of public demand, is an instructive one. But the new authorities could not control the way in which sport was integrated into working-class culture.

Gambling was never eradicated, and remained a perennial source of middle-class concern. The link between drinking and sport was not broken either, despite the efforts of the bench, and whereas rational recreationists saw sport as an alternative to the pub, virtually all sporting organisations in 19th century Leicester had pubs as headquarters and made feasting an important part of their yearly round. Spectatorism itself was in direct conflict with the participatory ethic of mid-century middle-class sport, yet for most of those involved with sport, it was the dominant form. On occasions, as when Wood won the bicycling championship in 1883 or the Fosse FC were promoted in 1908, spectator sport offered the occasion of mass celebration which was highly irrational in its form and wholly secular in its object. Yet the mass of spectators were fickle in their allegiances and obstinately refused to offer the regular, ordered support which would have made sport financially stable and enabled its bourgeois administrators to achieve their municipal aims.

## Chapter 7

## Leisure and the Labour Movement

A salient feature of Leicester's history throughout the period of this study is the existence of a strong popular radical tradition. The continuities of that tradition, from Chartism and Owenism, through secularism, radical internationalism and republicanism to socialism and the emergence of a powerful branch of the ILP have been traced by W. Lancaster, and related to decisive shifts in the structure of employment and the experience of work. Alongside this radical political tradition, and intimately related to it, were trade unions and co-operatives which made for working-class self-activity and organisation, particularly amongst skilled male workers in the elastic web, hosiery and boot and shoe industries. If the activities of Leicester's municipal council are analogous to those of the Birmingham of Chamberlain, the pervasiveness of its working-class organisations is redolent of Jowitt's Bradford.[1] The aim of the present chapter is to examine the impact of this network of organisations on the non-work time of Leicester's working class.

There is at once a problem of definition, since the business of political campaigning and co-operative management took up much of activists' time, yet is not at once identifiable as leisure. Here, as elsewhere, modern definitions of leisure tend to exclude involvement with work, politics and religion, suggesting that what is left represents individual self-expression, rather than engagement with wider social

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1. For the development of labour politics in Leicester, see W. Lancaster, op.cit. See also J. Walton, 'A History of Trade Unionism in Leicester to the end of the 19th century', Sheffield MA thesis, 1952.

issues. As Stephen Yeo has observed, such a rigid separation of leisure from other areas is itself ideologically charged and historically constructed.[2] The efforts of activists within the labour movement challenged the social barrier between those who, in some bourgeois views, were expected to concern themselves with public matters, which took up much of the non-work time of sections of the urban elite, and those who were expected when away from work to engage in recreative pursuits which would better fit them for labour. For trade union leaders, socialist propagandists and Labour representatives, their work for the movement must at times have consumed all their 'free' time. For such people, trade union and party activity had both political and cultural ends. The Leicester Trades Council Souvenir of the 1903 TUC Conference, held in the town, proclaimed that

> working men ... have not been behind in establishing a multitude of industrial organisations which have been of immense value, not alone in promoting true thrift and independence, but also in training sturdy democratic thinkers and orators who have fought ably for the people's rights. Trade unions, labour clubs, sick and dividend clubs, a huge co-operative distributive society, and a number of productive co-operative societies testify eloquently to the alertness of the average Leicester workman's mind.[3]

The reference to the 'average workman' is the special pleading of a movement striving to assert greater influence in a working-class culture which could be as impenetrable to socialist as to religious propaganda.

These were not the experiences of a majority of the working class, and while the implications of full participation in such organisations will be examined, the chief interest of the chapter is in the purposeful

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2. Yeo 1976, pp. 149-150.

3. Leicester Trades Council TUC 1903; Official Souvenir (Leicester 1903).

intervention of various parts of the labour movement, and of other predominantly working-class organisations such as working men's clubs and friendly societies, in popular recreation. It is intended to assess how far distinctive practices were evolved, including the establishment of independent institutions, and to determine whether or not the labour movement, through its press, notably the Leicester Pioneer, and the statements of its leaders, succeeded in developing a coherent critique of leisure as provided by philanthropic and commercial organisations. Two concerns underlie this project. Ralph Miliband has commended that the historic failure of the Labour Party to become coterminous with the working class was due to its failure to establish a cultural presence alongside its role as a political machine. A similar concern is to be observed in David Clark's work on the development of socialism in the Colne Valley. Secondly, Stephen Yeo contends in his article on the religion of socialism, that, after the ethical socialism of the 1880s and early 1890s had become subordinate to the machine-political ends of other institutions of the labour movement, British socialism lost the vision of Morris and Carpenter, a vision which suggested the need for cultural revolution to transform, along with much else, the content of leisure and its relationship to work.[4]

Mention has already been made of continuities in radicalism in Leicester, and it is an assumption inherent in local studies that such

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4. Ralph Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism (1961); David Clark, Colne Valley: Radicalism to Socialism (1981) esp. ch.6; Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life; the Religion of Socialism in Britain 1883-1896', HWJ, 4, autumn 1977. On William Morris see E.P. Thompson, William Morris (1955) and William Morris, 'Useful work versus useless toil' in A.L. Morton (ed.), Political Writings of William Morris (1967).

traditions are as important in understanding social processes as the synchronic influence of forces external to the place concerned. Hence this account begins, at first sight incongruously, with an examination of the adult education movement in the town, which, although it owed much to the philanthropic activities of Joseph Dare, David Vaughan and others, impinged on the activities of every radical grouping from Chartism to the ILP, and provides an insight into the autodidactic, artisanal culture which was the basis for the most thorough refutation of dominant forms of working-class leisure. The chapter then turns to Friendly Societies, working men's clubs, co-operatives and the ILP as providers of leisure before assessing the impact of such organisations on popular recreation as a whole.

## A. Adult education

David Vincent has observed that the interests of working-class autobiographers, and in particular their veneration of the written word, not only placed them 'in the vanguard of their own class' but also brought them into close contact with advanced middle class radicals.[5] The adult education movement was thus built from convergent, but ultimately dissimilar interests, for while the educators often perceived their role as a civilising mission, those who attended classes and lectures sought independence and self-improvement which challenged prevailing hierarchies. At the same time, it has been maintained that, after the 1840s, the radical edge of autodidacticism was blunted as the movement turned to self-help

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5. David Vincent, Bread, Knowledge and Freedom (1981), p.133.

and stress on individual advancement, becoming one of the bases of popular Liberalism.[6] Vincent disputes the accusation that such education was a conservative force, pointing out the importance of literacy for nascent labour organisations, while denying the working-class autobiographers whom he has studied a decisive role in the amelioration of class relations after 1848.[7]

The Leicester evidence supports Vincent's view rather than Richard Johnson's, but also leads us to question the validity of a simple contradiction between radical collectivism and conservative self-help. Between 1850 and c.1880, adult education in Leicester, notably that provided by the Leicester Domestic Mission's discussion class (f.1850) and the Working Men's College, which developed from an initiative by the vicar of St. Martin's, David Vaughan, in 1862, provided opportunities for working men to develop powers of argument, as well as basic literacy. While Joseph Dare prided himself on the Domestic Mission's ability to moderate fiery radicalism, the agenda remained a radical one.[8] The successful initiatives in education for working men were those which acknowledged the strong feeling for independence among participants, and which therefore gave some institutional power to class members, and which put little or no restriction on the curriculum. The attitude of those launching such ventures was similarly important. A working man, Henry Lee, of Joseph Street, wrote to the Leicester Chronicle in 1878 in reply to a lecture by the Unitarian minister, J. Page Hopps, complaining that

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6. Richard Johnson, '"Really useful knowledge"' radical education and working-class culture, 1790-1848', John Clarke, Chas Critcher and Richard Johnson (eds.), Working Class Culture. Studies in History and Theory (1979). Eileen Yeo, 'Culture and Constraint in Working-class movements, 1830-55' in Yeo and Yeo, op.cit.

7. D. Vincent op.cit., p.195.

8. LDM 1850 passim.

> he seems to have a sincere intention to elevate the genuine working man; but a rather hazy notion of how to do it ... I think he is much mistaken as to the character of working men. The fact is, some of us are sick and tired of being patronised and lectured by those so much above us, and of being taught economy and Christian graces, by those who live in different places and on higher levels.[9]

The Leicester Mechanics' Institute had failed for very much these reasons, bourgeois president, vice-presidents and committee, alienating the potential membership within a few years of its inception in 1833. By 1850, the Institute was moribund, reviving briefly for a series of Penny Readings in 1863-5.[10]

By contrast, both the Leicester Domestic Mission and the Working Men's College, by their use of the format of the discussion group as well as formal lectures, were open to negotiation over the curriculum. Reminiscences by former students confirm how widely they ranged. Writing in 1903, 'T.A.' of the Leicester Pioneer recalled the early years of Vaughan's discussion class (f.1864) where he was among those who learned from meeting an older generation of radicals. He noted that

> They talked to us of Chartism, of the anti-corn law agitation, one of them had taken part in the abolition of the iniquitous frame rents and charges ...[11]

In its early days, the Working Men's College offered basic literacy and vocational education as well as the political education of the discussion class. Vaughan's motivation derived from his experience as a clergyman

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9. LC 23.2.78.

10. Craig E. Grewcock, 'The Leicester Mechanics' Institute' in D. Williams (ed.), The Adaptation of Change (Leicester 1980). The Institute closed in 1869.

11. LP 30.5.1903.

in Whitechapel in 1858-60 and his encounter with F.D. Maurice, who spoke to the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society about the working men's college in London in February 1862. Vaughan began a similar venture in the St. Martin's schoolrooms the following month. His perspective was broadly similar to Dare's, and as free from narrow doctrinal considerations He saw a need for cultural intervention not against absolute poverty, but in the context of a growth of working class incomes in the 1860s and 1870s, which he believed manifested itself in the growth of Friendly Societies but also of drinking.[12] The college aimed to further working-class self-help, all the more necessary since it lacked wealthy patrons.[13] While it is difficult to gain any very precise understanding of what went on at class level, 'T.A.' claimed that it had contributed 'in a quiet way' to fostering the co-operative movement in Leicester, while the Leicester Commemorative Exhibition Catalogue of 1897 held that the discussion classes 'did much to rouse in the members that feeling of brotherhood which have [sic] ever since been the life and soul of the college'.[14] More specifically, the college provided an opportunity for the meeting of radicals of different generations and a conduit for radical traditions. George Newell, later a pioneer of the Leicester Hosiery Co-operative, was one of its early teachers, as well as secretary of the Amalgamated Framework Knitters' Society and organiser of Saturday evening concerts as counterattraction to drink. Tom Barclay recalled

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12. LC 18.9.1903. On Vaughan and the Working Men's College, see A.J. Allaway, Vaughan College, Leicester 1862-1962 (Leicester 1962).

13. Allaway op.cit., pp. 8-9.

14. Leicester Commemorative Exhibition Catalogue 1897 (Leicester 1897).

attending Newell's classes, and took the Society of Arts Certificate of English Language at the college in 1875. A number of ILP candidates for office in the 1900s recalled the formative influence of the college. N.C. Perkins, councillor for St. Margaret's ward from 1906, remembered that 'When I was 14 I was smitten with a thirst for knowledge'. This set him on a course which led him to the Working Men's College and the Belgrave Hall bible class, trade union membership in 1872, the Salvation Army and, from the time of J. Burgess's by-election campaign in 1894, to labour politics. Perkins was a founder member of the Leicester ILP in 1894. Another ILP candidate, T.H. Bedford (b.1857) who stood for the Board of Guardians in 1907, arrived in Leicester in 1874 and, at the suggestion of a friend, attended the college for three years until his marriage.[15]

With the expansion of state education in the 1870s, and the opening of the Ellis Memorial Technical School in 1890, the Working Men's College lost some of its functions. The pursuit of liberal education became institutionally separated from basic and technical education, to the impoverishment of all three. By the 1890s, many of the courses offered commercial skills for clerks, but there remained an important non-vocational element in its teaching. In 1903, an Examiner of Schools, Lott, commented with approval on the Working Men's College's commitment to liberal education that

> They have heard too much nowadays of education with a view of enabling us to compete with other countries. History should be studied otherwise than from a merely narrow national point of view.[16]

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15. George Newell obituary, LG 11.5.1901. Tom Barclay op.cit., pp. 41ff. LP 30.5.1903; 27.10.1906; 23.3.1907.

16. LP 30.5.1903.

But this phase of the influence of adult education on the labour movement was past. In the 1860s and '70s, it had offered both functional and critical knowledge, aiding individual and group advancement. By the turn of the century, it offered no such broad education.

At the same time, other institutions for adult education were established of a more bureaucratised character. The School Board made provision for evening schools from the 1870s, offering basic and recreational subjects.[17] The Adult School Movement was established as a voluntary organisation in the last decades of the century, broadly parallel to moderate temperance-oriented groups such as Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings. It has not been possible to establish when they were started, but the 1897 Commemorative Exhibition Catalogue noted that the Sunday morning classes were 'exerting so beneficial an influence in a quiet and unostentatious way in these later years of the Queen's reign'.[18]

The movement had enthusiastic backing from the Pioneer, although there is no indication that it was committed to the goals of the ILP, and several classes were based in churches. By 1902, they had achieved some popularity, with 3-4,000 attending the annual rally in the Palace Theatre at 9am on a Sunday morning. Yet while the rhetoric of the movement stressed 'democratic brotherhood', other reports suggest that the movement had more in common with the temperance movement than with the discussion classes of the 1860s. In 1908, for example, the Mayor paid tribute to it for its 'incalculable service to society'. The Pioneer concurred, adding that 'The men who have been led by it to think seriously about life and its problems are to be counted by thousands.'[19]

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17. 19D59/VI/3.
18. Leicester Commemorative Exhibition Catalogue, 1897.
19. LP 11.1.1908; 20.12.1902.

While the radical influence of autodidacticism, transmitted through discussion classes, lasted well beyond the 1840s, providing a formative experience for Labour leaders in the 1900s, adult education had changed in character by the 1890s, with divergent tendencies towards greater vocational content on the one hand and to divorce from the political concerns of working men on the other. A local branch of the WEA was formed in 1908, in response to a feeling that

> Hitherto, the middle classes have been the chief leaders in what is called 'popular education'. They have never seemed very anxious to enlist the working man himself as a manager in the educational enterprise ...

Among its officials were a number of leading ILP men, including Councillors George Hubbard and W.E. Hincks, but there is no indication that it achieved much success before 1914.[20]

## B. Friendly Societies

Friendly societies seemed to middle class observers the most frustrating of working class institutions. Dedicated to thrift and mutual aid against sickness and unemployment, they rejoiced in public displays of finery and drink-based sociability and ritual. The details of such practices are perhaps best known from Thomas Wright's essay 'Some non-beneficial customs of benefit societies'.[21] It is not possible to estimate how widespread such societies were in Leicester, and there is very little information about Leicester societies in the Parliamentary Enquiries of 1871-5 which provide the bulk of the evidence for Gosden's

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20. LP 12.9.1908. On Dare's discussion class see LDM. See also J. Crump, 'The audience for Shakespeare in Victorian Leicester' in R. Foulkes, (ed.), Shakespeare and the Victorian Stage (forthcoming) which traces links between adult education and the popular theatre audience.

21. (Thomas Wright) 'A Journeyman Engineer', Some Habits and Customs of the Working Class (1867).

work on friendly societies before the act of 1875. Such references as occur in the Leicester sources suggest that the more spectacular signs of friendly society activity belonged to the earlier part of the period, but the rise of affiliated societies with national organisations, such as the Foresters, should not obscure the fact that sociability remained an important aspect of friendly society membership in the 1870s. There are also suggestive links of personnel with branches of the labour movement.[22]

In 1889, the Leicester Chronicle and Mercury noted that

> Years ago club feasts used to be a great feature in the Whitsuntide festivities in Leicester ... The members of various Friendly Societies, wearing their fantastic regalia, carrying heavy banners, and accompanied by brass bands, used to parade the streets, go to church, and then to return to the lodge houses for dinner, but the function has latterly died out.

Such club days, as in Oxfordshire, survived if at all in rural districts.[23] There were still a large number of unregistered societies in Leicester in 1874, but according to the Royal Commissioner, Stanley, the two main ones, the Millstone Lane (f.1827) and Bond Street (f.1828) societies, with c.500 and 314 members in the town respectively, were suffering from declining membership as young men were attracted away by the social element of the Oddfellows and Foresters. T. Condon wrote in his Sunday diary in 1869 that 'we intend to go to the Oddfellows fete tomorrow and hope to enjoy ourselves'.[24]

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22. P.H.J.H. Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-75 (manchester 1961); Self-help (1973).

23. LC&M 15.6.89. Cf. Alun Howkins, Whitsun in 19th Century Oxfordshire HWJ Pamphlet No. 8, 1973.

24. PP1874.xxiii(654). T. Condon op.cit., 15.8.69.

The affiliated societies showed impressive growth from the late 1850s. Forestry was first established in Leicester in 1844, and a separate district from 1853. At that stage a £10 call for funeral expenses was still too much for the district's resources, but the accession of new courts from 1858, reaching 39 in 1885 and 53 in 1911 with over 7,000 members avoided further embarrassment. By the latter date, the society had resources of £84,000. There were also branches of the Manchester Union of Oddfellows, the Grand United Oddfellows, the National Associated Imperial Oddfellows, Rechabites and Druids, and over 12,000 affiliates to two friendly society medical organisations in 1886.[25]

It is difficult to assess how the social activities of the societies changed after 1870. Ceremonial remained important, although it marked pride in the orders' civic role rather than celebrating working class self help. Friendly societies were as prominent in the processions to mark the opening of Abbey Park by the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1883 as they had been at the royal wedding celebrations twenty years earlier.[26] But despite Stanley's observation on the sociability of the affiliated societies, it is of note that, with the opening of the Ancient Order of Foresters Institute in 1891, 21 courts began to use it for their meetings, leaving three in pubs and one elsewhere.[27] Reports of conferences in 1886 and 1912 suggest the societies were increasingly dominated by the lesser middle class, rather than the skilled workers who founded the societies in mid-century. The executive committee

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25. Ancient Order of Foresters, High Court Meeting 1886. Delegates' Guide to Leicester (Leicester 1886), p.23. pp.30ff; Leicester (Leicester 1912).

26. William Kelly op.cit. LC 14.3.63.

27. AOF 1912. Gosden 1961.

of the Leicester district in 1912 included a school board official, a teacher and a bank manager as well as employees (in what capacity is not stated) of a rope walk and an engineering firm.

Friendly societies also provided valuable experience of office for working men, some of whom were later to use it in the labour movement. Amos Mann, a founder of the Anchor co-operative, was a signatory of the new rules of the Star Benefit Society in 1881,[28] while H.H. Wooley, an ILP councillor in 1907, joined the Oddfellows in 1877.[29]

In common with other hosiery districts, Leicestershire had a large number of female benefit societies in 1874. Stanley found 25 in the whole county, with over 1,600 members. Many were only burial clubs and many had male officials, but that at Thrussington (f.1843) was a rare exception. Joseph Dare set up a female benefit society as part of the Leicester Domestic Mission's work, reporting in 1855 that he 'had hoped to establish a society upon better principles than other female clubs, many of which in this town are held at public houses'.[30] It soon collapsed, though, due to lack of friendly sentiment between the members, as Dare perceived it, and too heavy demands on the box. Nevertheless, Dare's comment provides a rare glimpse of sociability amongst working class women.

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28. Rules of the Star Benefit Society (Leicester 1881.

29. LP 26.10.1907.

30. LDM 1853.

C. Working men's clubs

Like adult education, the working men's club movement began as a philanthropic venture, aimed at providing conviviality outside the pub, and supported by much the same people. The Borough of Leicester Working Men's Club (f.1865) played a decisive role in the development of the Club and Institute Union (CIU) as it was one of the first clubs to assert its right to sell beer, against the wishes of its patrons and those of Henry Solly, and so laid the foundations for future prosperity. The club movement soon became remarkably diverse. Avowedly apolitical, the CIU was an organisation for the defence of the joint interests of a wide variety of clubs by 1900, gaining strength from their common but uncertain legal position and the need to present a united front in the face of licensing commissions and magistrates. In addition, the benefit of associate membership of all CIU clubs, a national newspaper, the Club and Institute Journal, and national and local sporting competitions and rallies served to further a sense of common identity. The Leicester district, for example, ran skittles and billiards trophies, and the Borough of Leicester won the national CIU swimming trophy in 1907 and 1908. The CIU, eager to defend itself against accusations of fostering illicit or excessive drinking sought to impose uniform standards on affiliated clubs, and was severe with those which broke the law concerning hours or sales to non-members, with dire implications for a number of Leicester clubs.[31]

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31. On working men's clubs in Leicester in the 1860s and Solly's dispute with the club over beer sales, see L.A. Marlow, 'The Working Men's Club Movement, 1862-1912. A study of the evolution of a working class institution', University of Warwick Ph.D. thesis 1980. pp360ff. CIJ 6. 1898; 1.1904; 10.1908.

Given the wide range of organisations which could affiliate, it is impossible to generalise about the cultural impact of these clubs, but some indication of the nature of the sociability for which they catered can be obtained from particular instances. By 1891, Leicester's largest club, the Borough of Leicester, had acquired its present spacious accommodation in Bond Street. Its hall had seating for over 1,000, with a small stage in one corner. It had been built with a loan of £6,000 from the Leicester Co-operative Society, and was described by the Club and Institute Journal as the foremost provincial club. Similar large, purpose-built halls were the Aylestone Working Men's Club (f.1901), which cost £3,000, and the Oddfellows Club and Institute in Humberstone Gate. The links between such clubs, the Co-operative Society and friendly societies are indicative of an ideal club culture of thrift, mutual self-help and respectability which the CIU's national officers wished to foster. In the same connection, the Borough of Leicester was much used for hospitality for the 1903 Trades Union Congress. An editorial in the Club and Institute Journal in 1899, for example, urged that 'we don't want to preach "saving" to working men, but we do say that every man should be in a friendly society'.[32]

Alongside such sentiments were signs of endeavour to ensure that clubs maintained something of their educative role. As well as sports teams and brass bands, the Borough of Leicester offered Sunday evening meetings, with choir and lectures, and 'high-class' concerts on other evenings. But Tom Barclay was more sceptical. By 1924, he claimed,

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32. CIJ 24.10.91; 9.5.91; 11.1900; 3.1903; 6.1899.

none of the major clubs in Leicester - the Aylestone, Belgrave, Asfordby Street, Manchester and Bond Street, had educational classes or debates. It is difficult to decide how soon this decline in educational activities set in, although Barclay's experience of Labour clubs led him to think it was usual for clubs to turn wholly to drink soon after their establishment. Gould's abolition of the bar of the Secular Society in 1901 may have been in order to forestall such a trend.[33]

Other clubs were more transient than the Borough of Leicester. The Leicester Vocal club, Brunswick Street, was admitted to the CIU in 1898, prosecuted for sales to non-members in 1901 and closed in 1902.[34] The United Trades Club lasted just over a year.[35] There is a sense in which the CIU was embarrassed by a number of these lesser clubs. They were inevitably most susceptible to infringement of the regulations and prosecution. At the turn of the century, police and the trade alike turned hostile attention towards Leicester's clubs, and the Club and Institute Journal urged that they take steps to ensure that only non-CIU clubs should be in danger of prosecution. The Club and Institute Journal commented in 1899 that

> Leicester clubs are coming in for a deal of abuse by publicans and their friends in the town. They hold their own well in the newspaper war, and can well afford to ignore the attack if they are sure they have nothing to be ashamed of.

It recommended, in the light of comments by the mayor on the occasion of the prosecution of the committee of a non-CIU club, the East Leicester (above pp.225-7) that 'The clubs should take some joint

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33. Barclay op.cit., p.63.

34. CIJ 2.1898; 7.1901; 5.1902.

35. CIJ 3.1900; 6.1901.

action to raise club standards and we think the Borough of Leicester club should take the lead in this'.[36] Even so, some features of the management of the Borough of Leicester club itself were disquieting. In particular, it was commented upon that the club admitted women visitors to the bar, a bad example to other clubs and unknown outside Leicester.[37]

Leicester clubs thrived under a licensing regime which restricted the activities of pubs and music halls, and, in their concert rooms, could offer a legal substitute for the free and easies made illegal under the local act of 1884. They offered members a feeling of freedom from exploitation by the drink trade (although this was not the case with so-called brewers' clubs) longer hours until 1902, and gave better value for money. Several endangered their financial position through uneconomic trading. The Club and Institute Journal noted in 1901 that many were less prosperous than they should be due to this tendency, while others had suffered losses through the appointment of inefficient and dishonest stewards.

Many clubs seem to have been little different from public houses, replacing landlord and brewery with self-ownership, and offering a wider range of activities. Of greater interest for the present study are a small number of radical political clubs. The Leicester Radical Club had premises in a disused chapel in Vine Street, decorated with portraits of Bradlaugh and other reformers, the pews converted into seats. An inscription on the wall prohibited dancing on Sundays, while the winter evenings were spent listening to lectures on advanced subjects by outside

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36. CIJ 10.99; 6.1901. On 'police crusade' see 7.1901.

37. CIJ 10.99; 5.1903.

speakers. It is not clear what relation the club had to the Secular Hall, which had similar activities, but the continuing veneration of Bradlaugh in the 1890s may suggest a group which rejected the Secular Society's increasing involvement with Socialism. By 1899, the club had closed. The Club and Institute Journal noted that 'the Leicester Radical, we are pleased to hear, has ... gone - left no address'. This suggests that, deprived of dedicated radicals, the club had degenerated to a mere drinking establishment. Tom Barclay seems to have had no great opinion of the club, referring to its popular appellation as 'the flea pit'.[38]

Of much greater significance for the development of the labour movement in Leicester was the Labour Club in Bedford Street, and its successor in Millstone Lane.[39] The first was formed some time after a dinner held to commemorate the Paris Commune in 1885, and was certainly in existence by 1893. The No. 1 club started as a means of uniting socialists of all types, although anarchist members were expelled in 1895 as it came under the control of ILP socialists from NUBSO. Tom Barclay taught classes at the club, including a lecture on modern revolutionary poets in February 1895, but looked back on this, and indeed on club life in general, with disappointment. He recalled that 'the club degenerated, and finally became extinct ... died of booze, I suppose, like the working men's club of Vine Street .... In fact, the Leicester No. 1 Labour Club was the subject of a special meeting of the CIU executive in 1901, where it was reported that 'The club had on several occasions been in

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38. CIJ 24.10.91; 2.99. Barclay op.cit., p.64.

39. On the relationship of the Labour Club to the development of Labour movement in Leicester, see Lancaster 1982, pp. 238-40.

the courts, culminating in the conviction of three men, all men of known bad character, for watch robbery in the club'. The executive blamed the choice of a poor steward for such ill-discipline, and had no hesitation in expelling the club from the CIU, on a motion seconded by a representative from the Borough of Leicester club and supported by another from the Oddfellows' club.[40]

The experience of the decline of the No. 1 club lies behind the insistence on the control of drink which pervades the rules of its successor. Founded in 1896, the No. 2 club was a joint SDF/ILP venture, envisaged as a recruiting and training ground for both. The preface to its rules states that 'the Club does not exist solely for the sale of liquors ...'. Drunkenness, gambling and foul language were all to be prevented by a strong committee and a good steward. Drink and cigar sales were not to be allowed to detract from educational and social work, and there were to be no sales after 11.15pm. The club aimed to promote 'decorum and gentlemanly conduct' within its walls and to provide 'rational amusement, mutual helpfulness, and mental improvement'. This was to be achieved through the provision of

> Healthy and brilliant reading matter, together with sets of games of various kinds [which will] offer means at once of education and recreation side by side with the drinks, which we hope and trust will be consumed to quench thirst and not for drinking's sake.[41]

The most striking feature of these rules is their similarity to the aims of the CIU in the 1860s, once drink sales had been allowed. They

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40. LP 2.2.95. CIJ 2.1901. Barclay loc cit.

41. Rules of Leicester Labour Club No. 2 (Leicester 1896). Preface and rules 4, 30-2, 34.

represent an attempt to come to terms with the popularity of drinking, rather than to retreat into the teetotalism prevalent in the ILP locally and nationally. This second club was little more successful than the first. Tom Barclay asked in 1924 'Does anyone remember Labour Club No. 2 of Millstone Lane? That also went down, and I suppose for similar reasons'. Barclay's experience of club life suggests that it was inhospitable to his attempts at making socialists. Reflecting on his career, he wrote

> I have at different times been a member of four or five clubs, including the Secular Club, and an Irish National Club; two of these called themselves Labour Clubs, but they did precious little for the cause of labour. This was not the fault of their founders, who were men full of high hopes for something other than beer and skittles ...[42]

Like the philanthropic promoters of the CIU before them, socialists found that drink-based popular recreation was not to be co-opted in the quest for rational goals.

D. The labour movement and work discipline. Trade unions and co-operatives.

It is a commonplace of labour history that the trade union movement of the second half of the 19th century was more interested in improving the position of its members within the capitalist mode of production rather than challenging that mode. Shorter hours were sought as a means of preserving employment opportunities, rather than as a means of challenging the division of work and leisure embodied in the factory system. The

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42. Barclay op.cit., pp.62-4. For an account of the development and activities of the Leicester Secular Society, see Lancaster 1982, pp.128ff.

ambiguous position of trade unionists in industries where domestic and workshop production persisted, accompanied by a culture which rejected factory discipline has been discussed in Chapter 1. Speeches by labour leaders on the occasion of disputes confirm the view that, whatever individuals may have believed, the need to increase hours of leisure as a means to working class advancement was not prominent in trade union campaigns.

The speech by a Mr. Brown at a Trades Council demonstration in 1907 in favour of an 8 hour day for railwaymen was thus very unusual in arguing the need for time for cultural development. No necessary connection was felt to exist between NUBSO's rule No. 6, which set out the aim 'to reduce the hours of labour', and No. 9, advocating 'the use of all legitimate means for the moral, social, educational and political advancement of its members'.[43] Nor, as S.G. Jones has shown, was there enthusiasm on the part of the Trade Union movement as a whole for paid holidays before the inter-war years. Achievement of suitable remuneration for work done, not reliance on the generosity of the employer in granting holidays with pay remained their principle aim.[44] This is not to deny that trade unions had a major impact on the way people perceived work, and on how they valued 'free' time. But while trade unions in Leicester fought hard to maintain workplace control and to maintain skills, notably in the shoe trade dispute of 1895, there is no evidence that they sat it as their task to formulate or put into practice radical alternatives to the division of time between work and leisure.

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43. LP 21.3.1908; for the rules of NUBSO see Fox op.cit.

44. S.G. Jones, 'Labour and Recreation', University of Manchester Ph.D. thesis, 1983.

For any such rethinking, it is necessary to turn to Leicester's manufacturing co-operatives in both shoe and hosiery production.[45] It is appropriate to consider their attempts to modify work discipline, to provide educational facilities, and to offer co-operators a range of other recreational opportunities.

A motive behind the establishment of the Equity boot and shoe works was dissatisfaction with conditions at the C.W.S. factory in Duns Lane, leading to a strike in 1886. That relations between the C.W.S. and its employees were no different from those common in similar capitalist enterprises is suggested by E.O. Greening's reminiscence of the 1887 C.W.S. conference in Leicester. He recalled

> The disappointment which ran through the ranks of the delegates when they heard that their workers, so far from gathering in numbers, to acclaim the course, had taken themselves off for a holiday to enjoy some games.[46]

In their efforts to overcome the division between capital and labour, co-operative pioneers sought to make such alienation a thing of the past, and to bring about major cultural change among their workers. Co-operative workers would participate fully in the life of the firm. As Blandford and Newell wrote of co-partnership in the Leicester hosiery co-operative (f.1876),

> While the worker is employed by a private firm his duty ... to the community is hidden from him ... or he thinks he is satisfied by a minimum performance of duty to the employer.[47]

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45. On the development of co-operatives, see Lancaster op.cit., ch. X.

46. Edward O. Greening, A pioneer co-partnership (Leicester 1923), p.30.

47. Thomas Blandford and George Newell, History of the Leicester Co-operative Hosiery Manufacturing Society (Leicester 1898) p.63.

For those who became involved in managing enterprises, in addition to their daily work, it could become an all-consuming exercise, and Greening describes the long hours which were spent in this way in the early days. This was seen as a vital part of the life-enriching experience of co-operative production, a practical exercise in business. Greening compared such activity to more conventional leisure pursuits, urging

> Give men, and women, their true status in industry and work becomes as interesting to them as football, cricket or golf; hunting, fishing or any other toilsome games.[48]

Where co-operatives were successful, hours and work discipline could be unusually easy-going. At their Friars' Causeway factory before 1892, the Equity worked flexible hours for a 53½ hour week. The Anchor shoe co-operative (f.1892) had the shortest hours of any Leicester shoe factory in 1897 when they were reduced from 54 to 49. Amos Mann noted of the attitude of Anchor workers that

> The freedom of expression which the workers use towards those in authority makes it difficult for some natures to get along with them. The best side of workers needs to be appealed to, rather than exercising absolute authority or autocratic methods.

In 1898, the same workers were given a week's holiday with pay.[49]

With the advent of mechanisation and intense American competition from the mid-1890s until c.1910, the margins with which the boot and shoe co-operatives had been able to pay for such privileges were threatened. Professional managers were introduced and labour discipline tightened. By 1912, Greening notes,

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48. Greening, p.158.

49. Amos Mann, Democracy in Industry (Leicester 1914), pp.9, 43. Greening loc cit.

> Constant additions were being made to the code of conduct to be observed in the workers, showing the growth of ideas and propriety. They had suspended workers for bad language, and dismissed some for drinking ....[50]

As at Owen's New Lanark (which was of course not a co-operative) paternalistic attitudes towards the workforce produced a search for godly efficiency, but all the more terrifying as imposed by other members of the workforce. Meanwhile, some of the generous terms of employment were withdrawn. Bad years in 1907 and 1910 led the Anchor to cease its holidays with pay scheme.

Education was given high priority by co-operators, but suffered severely with difficult financial circumstances. As Amos Mann wrote, 'All co-operative societies, worthy of the name, make provision for the education of their members'.[51] Co-operatives made differing percentages of their profits available for educational projects - 8% by the Anchor, 5% by the Equity, 1.25% by the hosiery co-operative. The usual form that provision took was for some sort of reading room or evening institute, where workers could spend non-work time, reducing the physical division between work and leisure. There were classes on social and political subjects, co-operative knowledge, physical culture, first aid, and, at the Equity, dancing. Games, including whist, were provided for, as was singing. There were lectures by outside speakers and by Leicester co-operators, bazaars, tea meetings, cricket teams, flower shows and excursions. Major events in co-operative history, such as anniversaries

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50. Greening, p.158.

51. Mann, op.cit., p.53.

of co-operatives, were marked by festivities.[52] Mann defined the aims of such activities as improvement of knowledge of the co-operative movement, and the teaching of subjects conducive to public service, while Greening saw social gatherings as valuable in strengthening group identity.[53]

With the advent of harsher trading conditions, education budgets were cut. Equity's was reduced to 2½% of profits in 1903, and by 1909, its education committee was unable to do anything more than contribute to holiday funds and give £30 subsidy to the annual outing to Skegness. When educational activities were resumed, it was done by the society paying for places in the town's technical schools.[54] There was also increasing recourse to syllabuses certified by the Co-operative Union, and to University extension courses.[55]

The co-operative movement also generated a number of other activities which made for socialisation between members of different co-operatives, including the CWS. Co-operative anniversaries were occasions for representatives of all co-operatives to meet. There was a co-operative choral union, co-operative flower shows and a co-operative holiday association.[56] The co-operative ideal spread to allotment gardening, and by 1903 there were co-operative allotment societies in both Newfoundpool and Aylestone, enjoying lower rents, the possibility of bulk purchase and stronger bargaining positions with their private landlords. The

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52. ibid., pp.54ff; Greening p.43 passim. As an example, see the opening of a new co-operative printing society, celebrated with a gala, band and tea meeting, at which there was an address by G.J. Holyoake, veteran secularist and present on several such occasions in Leicester. LP 26.6.1901. See also Leicester Co-operative Printing Society Ltd., Twenty-one years of co-partnership in Printing (Leicester 1913, pp.30-34.

53. Greening op.cit., p.122; Mann op.cit., p.54.

54. Greening op.cit., pp.137, 151.

55. Mann op.cit., p.54; Greening op.cit., p.137.

56. LP 15.2.1902; 31.8.1903; 4.1.1913.

secretary of the Co-operative Production Federation lectured the Newfoundpool society on the benefits of co-operative gardening, and showed that the movement had long term aims similar to those of producer co-operatives in the wish to propagate active democratic participation in the life of the town. Halstead told them that

> Their society would give them a stronger sense of belonging to one another, and should the association spread all over the town, they would learn larger lessons, and obtain fuller powers in managing great affairs. Through their allotment system they would feel more and more of that broad and active citizen spirit, which is the great need of this age, and which working men will have to get to fulfill the great mission of democracy.

Co-operative allotment gardening even offered a means for the reunification of manufacturing and agricultural production, according to Halstead, and so for overcoming a fundamental division of labour.[57]

Lacking in all sources is any sense of how co-operators responded to the long-term aims and cultural initiatives of their co-operatives. Producer co-operatives offered a refuge from mechanisation and later from unemployment, as Lancaster observes, but how many believed they were a radical alternative to alienated labour? Certainly, those who founded the Humberstone Garden Suburb in 1909, a co-operative housing development established by Anchor workers, sought to translate the co-operative experience into a whole way of life. The estate was planned with land allotted for public playing space, gardens and an Institute with billiard room.[58] Yet once again it is uncertain how far these

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57. LP 9.5.1903.

58. LP 21.8.1909.

co-operators created a different type of community, rather than in providing themselves with superior housing pleasantly situated on the edge of the urban area. As Tom Barclay was aware, co-operation tended to favour the better-off workers who could afford it, but did little for the lot of the working class as a whole. Co-operative visions of transcending the divisions of labour and capital, work and leisure do not seem to have become a dominant force in the development of popular culture in Leicester, but remained the privilege of a small, if politically influential, group of workers and their families.[59]

v. Socialists and the critique of popular culture

A division similar to that identified by Stephen Yeo between the ethical, 'making socialists' phase of socialism up to the mid-1890s and the pragmatic, vote-winning Labourism of the following decades can be identified in the attitudes of leading Leicester socialists to popular culture.[60] The chronology is different, however, and the contrast between the views of F.J. Gould and Tom Barclay, rooted respectively in secularism and autodidacticism, and those of MacDonald is generational rather than strictly chronological. It is apparent, though, that by 1910, a critique of popular recreation was rarely voiced, and instead Labour leaders sought to exploit dominant forms of entertainment in order to lay claim more firmly to popular roots. A continuity throughout the period is the strong support given by Labour leaders to the temperance cause (although not the formal organisations of the Temperance movement). In terms

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59. On the suburb's origin and growth, see Lancaster 1982, pp.295ff.

60. S. Yeo 1977.

of generating a practical critique, through a network of their own leisure organisations, the various branches of the Labour movement had little impact on popular recreation, and established few lasting institutions. Where they did succeed in so doing, similarity to contemporary institutional forms is more striking than the development of any distinctive radical practice. In this sense, it is possible to agree with Yeo that

> Just as late 19th century capitalism and early 20th century capitalism was altering the context within which chapels, football clubs, dispensaries or universities could develop, so too it imposed severe constraints upon what type of labour movement came into being.[61]

Having said this, though, Yeo has reasserted that there is constraining relationship between culture and the mode of production. It serves as a reminder that there were social, economic and legal restraints on the forms of recreation which could be developed by a political movement seeking to win the allegiance of a population already provided with commercial, voluntary and municipal facilities for leisure, some of which were highly capitalised. The dilemma of the labour movement, whether to reject all these in favour of what socialists perceived as more convivial alternative forms, or to use them as a means of winning support was not long a major issue, and was resolved in favour of the latter.

The strongest critique of contemporary leisure within the Labour movement can be found in the columns of the Labour Pioneer before the paper's relaunch as a more conventional, although still pro-ILP paper in 1905.[62] Principal among these was F.J. Gould, secretary of the Secular

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61. S. Yeo 1976, p.266.

62. LP 11.11.1905.

Society and an ILP representative on the School Board. Among such writers there was a strong sense not only of the injustice of the uneven distribution of cultural goods, but also of the alienating, impoverished character of what passed for recreation. 'Jacques', in an article 'Leicester Craftsmen Past and Present', identified the cause of the degenerate state of popular recreation with the division of labour, and, in the tradition of William Morris, looked to overcome it by restoring earlier forms of production. He wrote in 1901 that

> A man need never be a clicker, a laster, a bricklayer, a hosiery "hand" ... The present industrial conditions cannot last for ever: need not last an hour longer than it takes the British worker to shape himself as a many-sided, brainy, enterprising master of a craft.

Like Morris, 'Jacques' was apparently not concerned with the practicalities of social transformation. Later parts of the article, on the other hand, show that, unlike the ethical socialists of the previous 20 years, he was willing to contemplate reformist paths towards his utopia. He noted that many working men had already made the first step towards a better life. These were 'reading, thinking, acute men with capabilities outside their trade, with gardens to tend, and homes of a kind they are proud to take a friend to.' These men who neither smoked nor drank excessively, had much in common with bourgeois ideals of the improved working man. 'Jacques', like MacDonald, compromised socialist vision with a reformism which was conservative in its attitude to popular culture. In this article, the two lie uneasily, side by side, a profound critique of the nature of work ending up in approval of the cult of domesticity.

F.J. Gould's statements were largely condemnatory of the entertainment industries, and are superficially reminiscent of earlier criticism of music hall and theatre by rational recreationists. Yet in Gould's case,

there is an underlying feeling that what is wrong is not that such recreations unduly excited their audiences, but that they failed to fulfill them intellectually and spiritually. Gould, in deploring the physical and moral defects of Leicester's children in 1901, following the scandal of recruitment for the Boer War, linked the former to the inadequacies of economic arrangements, and wrote of the latter that

> defect is writ, plain and ugly, in the manners of great masses of people in workplaces, roads, public vehicles, and on holiday occasions. It is writ, plain and ugly, in the mucky papers which we call popular literature, in the clap-trap which we call popular drama, and in the betting which spreads its shine over popular amusements.[63]

Gould was more specific in his critique of variety entertainment and theatre. He deplored the silly comedy at the Opera and the sensational plays at the Theatre Royal. He found the Palace entertainments wholesome but trivial, and commented on the opening that 'a place such as this should exert greater powers of refining and elevating by stimulating the imagination and aiding the higher faculties.[64]

Gould was an outsider to the music hall, and reported on the occasion of a visit to the Palace in 1901 that it was the first hall he had been in since he went to the Alhambra in the 1870s. He found the acts inane and pointless, and went on to generalise from the nature of the entertainment about the spiritual destitution of modern life. Like the scrappy, disjointed programme at the Palace,

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63. LP 7.9.1901. On F.J. Gould, see F.J. Gould, The Life-Story of a Humanist (1923) and History of the Leicester Secular Society (Leicester 1900).

64. LP 22.6.1901.

> We live in bits - our work, our play, our religion, are detached and partitioned, and thousands of People prefer the scattered items of a music hall to the connected thought of an epic or the sustained interest of the classical drama.

Gould looked forward to a time when we should 'content ourselves with our own natural and mutual mirth', a pastoral idyll when

> we shall rather watch the red-cheeked Leicester lasses trip with their sweethearts on the sward than loll under the electric light on richly upholstered seats and study the mysteries of the high-kick.[65]

The Pioneer's attitude to sport was an ambiguous one. A socialist thorough in his rejection of the popular culture of the day, Tom Barclay, was dismayed that people continued as wage-slaves without considering the political action necessary for their liberation, were easily distracted by entertainments and religion. He lamented that

> Some are concentrated on "the next world", saving their souls, some are absorbed by trivialities, Football, Cricket and Horse-Racing; you'd think they must be capitalists and millionaires.[66]

As a newspaper aiming for wide circulation, the Pioneer could not in the long run afford to omit coverage of sporting events. As a reporter of the Fosse v. Woolwich Arsenal match noted in 1904, 'The Pioneer is a Labour paper, and everything of a wholesome nature in which the people are interested should find a place in its columns ...'. But while it never rejected spectator sport per se, the paper from time to time in the early 1900s reflected a concern for the excesses of professional sport which calls to mind the objections of amateurs from the 1860s on. An editorial of 1903 regretted that Leicester Fosse were appealing

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65. LP 14.9.1901.

66. Barclay op.cit., p.59.

for funds from the public, arguing that it was wrong to divert finite philanthropic resources to support 'those twin social evils, passivity and professionalism' when many health-promoting institutions were short of funds too. After all, 'a gymnasium is one thing, a circus is another'. The editorial contrasted the vitality of sport on Victoria Park with scenes at the Fosse ground. Yet such a standpoint was extreme, even for the Pioneer. Prior to 1905, sports columnists, who came and went frequently, sometimes leaving little sports coverage, felt obliged to justify their position. After the relaunch in 1905, there were no such qualms. 'Spectator' introduced a new column in 1901 with a defence of interest in 'manly sport', such as 'clean, manly and healthy' bowls. Of the Fosse, he wrote that

> Provided one's enthusiasm for the game is not allowed to develop beyond the limit of legitimate pleasure, good rather than evil should result from participating in it, either as players or spectators.[67]

The Pioneer didn't offer a different kind of coverage to other papers, and was no more perceptive of the political economy of sport. Eventually the journalistic imperatives of news gathering outweighed the political predilictions of editors and commentators such as Gould. Indeed, on the occasion of a musicians' strike in Stoll's halls, affecting the Palace whose audience was picketted by members of the Amalgamated Musicians' Union, the paper's industrial columns reported the strike sympathetically while the theatre columnist carried on reviewing as if nothing unusual was happening.[68]

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67. LP 22.6.1901; 13.6.1903; 2.1.1904.

68. LP 23.1.1914. After 1905, the paper's editor, A.H. Reynolds, followed a far less dogmatic policy than the paper had previously had. He wrote to Rowland Barrett in 1910, when the latter was with the Coventry Sentinel, offering him a job with the Pioneer, assuring him that 'You need have no idea that you were simply becoming an appendage of the Labour Party. This is a newspaper, and we should expect only newspaper work from you, and should have preferred you not to have become closely identified with the movement'. Barrett Mss 83/3/APR/7. On the foundation of the Leicester Pioneer see Lancaster 1982, pp.236ff.

Like Adorno, and like Leavisite critics, Gould had little understanding of the dynamics and aesthetics of popular entertainments, and knew only enough to be sure that he didn't like what he saw. His lack of sympathy for the reasons why people went to music halls and football matches or read cheap literature led him to dismiss such pursuits in moral terms, and made his critique of no help in generating any radical practice. Sensitive to the deficiencies of commercial entertainments, Gould could offer no alternative beyond reasserting the value of high culture or resorting to prelapsarian myths of pastoral idyll. The Pioneer's attitude to sport indicates that it had nothing to offer beyond recapitulation of the participatory ethic of the gentleman amateur in a weakened form. It found it easier still to conform to contemporary conventions of theatrical and sporting journalism.[69]

Describing the passing of the Religion of Socialism, Stephen Yeo observes that the connections between politics and culture which were to survive in the Labour movement into the 20th century were 'windy and macDonaldite, not sharp and Morris like'.[70] The tendency of socialist critics of popular recreation in Leicester to vere towards a rhetoric of improvement and domesticity has already been shown. MacDonald's own vision of the future was revealed on the occasion of the Leicester Co-operative Flower Show in 1903 when the candidate, awarding prizes, commented that

> That afternoon was full of the hope that the time was not very far distant - however far distant it might sometimes seem - when every wage-earner would have his little allotment and garden ...

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69. LP 6.2.1914.

70. Yeo 1977, p.44.

He hoped that each household would one day have a library of 'classical treasures' for winter reading, and a garden for summer recreation. He urged gardeners to

> cultivate the old, simple flowers, the old, simple habits and the unassuming nature, the independent, the straight-forward, the life of simplicity which has been so characteristic of their English history and their English life.

Like Gould, MacDonald believed that 'the natural place of man was in the midst of nature'.

But while Gould's was hardly a highly articulated vision akin to Morris's, he was at least aware of the fragmentation of contemporary life. MacDonald's domestic idyll was a suburban dream, in which the wage-earner, better remunerated no doubt, was to find happiness in home and garden. He does not advocate a reintegration of work and leisure, such as that envisaged by co-operators. Like the adult schools' rhetoric of brotherhood, the MacDonaldite ILP had little to offer in the development of a cultural politics.

The Labour minority on the Town Council sought to distribute more widely opportunities for leisure, notably in campaigning for shorter hours and better Sunday arrangements for council employees. Their major contribution to the development of municipal leisure facilities was in their active support for the building of the new municipal hall, the De Montfort Hall, opened in 1913. Rowland Barrett noted that this, along with the outbreak of World War I, the campaign for women's votes, strikes at the CWS and Wolsey factories and the 1913 by-election were the major events of his time as a socialist journalist in Leicester in 1913-15.[71] Labour interest in the project was in part due to the

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71. Barrett MSS 83/7/LE/1.

need for a place to hold rallies and public meetings. It also represents an assertion of Labour's role in the advancement of civic life, a local version of the MacDonaldite aim of attaching the Labour Party to the existing political system rather than trying to subvert it. A similar attitude is revealed in the Pioneer's comments on the Coronation celebrations in 1911, upholding the value of ceremonial. The Leicester processions, it wrote, were

> An illustration of the ceremonial of the entirely useful and desirable kind ... In that procession, all the interests, which according to their several lights, are striving for good government and mutual self-respect, were represented; there was the smallest possible intrusion of the military element ... We rejoiced to see our Labour representatives taking their due and proper place with others, claiming their right to as full, and honourable a part in civic government as those who in earlier years usurped these functions for themselves.

At the same time, it deplored those socialists who, in what it described as the fashion of the early zeal of the movement, opposed the ceremony and objected to the cult of the Union Jack.[72] The demand for access to existing forms of ceremonial, and of recreation, had taken the place of attempts to develop a cultural critique.

## E. Recreational institutions of the labour movement

The Leicester labour movement does not seem to have given high priority to recreational activities. Whereas in the Colne Valley, the Labour Party was able in the first decade of the 20th century to achieve a prominent place in the recreational life of the people in small textile towns and villages, in Leicester, other forms of leisure had long been

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72. LP 1.7.1911; 15.7.1911.

established. It was more a matter of the ILP using existing forms - bazaars, tea meetings, lectures, Saturday evening socials - to bolster its finances and morale, than of trying to reform popular amusements. Nor, despite Yeo's suggestion to the contrary, were socialist alternatives out-competed by a 'fully-developed mass leisure industry' coming into its own. Major commercial leisure facilities, pubs, music hall and spectator sport existed from at least 1880, before the inception of any socialist alternatives.[73] Moreover, it is difficult to identify any fresh cultural initiatives by socialists as such, other than the Labour Clubs and the efforts of co-operatives. Socialist recreational activities were aimed at establishing group solidarity; new adherents were to be run by political propaganda, the open-air meeting and electioneering.

Open-air meetings in established patches such as Russell Square, the Market Place and Infirmary Square were held by socialist propagandists from the 1890s, representing a continuity of tradition of popular oratory exploited by evangelical religious speakers in the 1880s. Indeed, several members of the Leicester ILP had been Salvationists, while others may have acquired similar skills as temperance campaigners. The meetings continued to attract large crowds until the First World War, and constituted a popular Sunday evening activity in the summer and autumn. As a means of propaganda, it had its limitations. As the Pioneer observed,

> The market place provides an audience appreciative of broad and sweeping statements of fact or argument, but it is more difficult to hold listeners for more detailed discourse of some aspect of the social problem.

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73. Yeo 1977, p.31.

It was quite impossible, for example, to communicate the finer points of the minority report of the Poor Law Commission.[74]

Similar propaganda was carried out in suburban districts, and constituted the bulk of the work of the Clarion movement in Leicester. A Clarion Cycle Club had been in existence in the town since at least 1901, and Amos Sheriff sold the official Clarion cycle from his shop. But while Clarion runs three or four times a week provided exercise for members, it was the arrival of the Midland Clarion van in August 1908 which reached the largest number of townspeople.[75]

The increased burden of electioneering took up much of the time of activists. It could have a social aspect all of its own, as witnessed by the social to celebrate J.E. Jordan's return to the Board of Guardians for Westcotes ward in 1913. About 180 people, including Keir Hardie, met at the Emanuel Church schools. But there was a feeling that electioneering had developed at the expense of the social life of the movement. In 1913, on the occasion of an ILP social and dance in St. Margaret's ward, the Pioneer noted that

> The opinion has often been expressed that the social phase of the labour movement has been neglected. While the implicit function of a ward organisation is the carrying on of a vigorous propaganda, a complete understanding and uniting of members is most essential.

It was hoped that the social would 'strengthen the bonds of brotherhood'. Six years earlier, the Spinney Hill ward had decided to hold fortnightly meetings to discuss local and national political issues at a coffee house in Rolleston Street as a means of 'organising a band of workers

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74. LP 4.9.1909.

75. LP 14.9.1901; 4.8.1906; 29.8.1908.

for propaganda work, and keeping in touch with one another between elections'. Such statements suggest that social activities were seen as a means of creating a more effective political machine, not of making socialists.[76]

This is not to deny that individual socialists did not see their activities in more profound terms. This may have been especially true of those associated with the Labour Churches. W.E. Wilford (b.1879), candidate for Aylestone in the 1908 borough election, had progressed from reading Blatchford's Merrie England, Ruskin, Carlyle and Tolstoy to classes at the technical school, university extension lectures and a scholarship for summer study at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He was a member of the Aylestone Wesleyan Chapel and a founder member of the Labour Church which met at the Hazel Street schools. For him, socialism was 'the political instrument for the realisation of the kingdom of God on earch'.[77] But the outstanding feature of the Labour churches in Leicester was the secular content of their meetings, which Lancaster interprets as a demonstration that their raison d'etre was to find a legitimate means of holding socialist meetings in public buildings on Sundays. They seem also to have been very short lived. The names of six appear in the listings of the Pioneer. They do not seem to have existed in 1895, and Lancaster concludes that they were in decline by 1910.[78] Their peak was thus between c.1900 and c.1908, after which there are no reports of them in the Pioneer.

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76. LP 30.11.1907; 3.1.1913; 21.11.1913.

77. LP 16.10.1908.

78. The six are Park Hall, Belgrave, Abbey Ward, S. Leicester, Hazel Street, and Green Lane. See also Lancaster 1981, p.386.

S.G. Jones concludes that the 1930s, rather than the 1900s represented the high point of the provision of recreation by the Labour movement.[79] There is certainly nothing to suggest that the 1900s witnessed significant penetration of popular recreation by the movement in Leicester. There are numerous reports of various activities of the ILP and other bodies between 1905 and 1914 - an ILP harvest festival, ILP holiday camp, ILP socials, ILP excursions to High Tor farm, Coalville ('the first picnic demonstration of the Leicester ILP'), an ILP camera club ramble. A branch of the Fabian Society was formed in 1908, and a Socialist Sunday School in 1910. Finally, in 1914, it was resolved to establish an ILP football team, but the move was overtaken by events.[80]

In 1901, the Leicester Guardian, in its series on religious services, ran an item on the Sunday evening weekly meeting of the ILP in the Corn Exchange, where the Labour Church hymn book was in use. It noted that in association with the meeting there was a Clarion Fellowship with its own vocal union, field club and cycle club, all of which had their own social evenings and dinners. There was a Ruskin Hall class for men, with two weekly meetings for the study of history, a ladies' sewing circle, a literature stall and a book club.[81] But while all this may have provided an intense social life for its members, none of it was significantly different in form from the peripheral organisations of an active church, and it is open to question how far outsiders would

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79. S.G. Jones op.cit., p.104.

80. LP 22.9.1906; 20.4.1907; 26.9.1908; 17.7.1909; 8.4.1911; 2.7.1010; 9.1.1914; 19.6.1914.

81. LG 6.4.1901.

have perceived it as such. It is difficult to find in Leicester a parallel to Paul Thompson's view of the Woolwich Labour Party in the 1890s and 1900s, which he claims 'extended the party organisation until it became an educational and social movement as well as a political machine'.[82]

## F. Conclusion

The recreational activities and critique of the labour movement represent a continuity with the self-improving, artisanal culture of the adult education movement. Sharing methods and forms of rational recreationists, the goal was to further working class independence through sobriety and knowledge, hence the commitment of so many labour leaders to education and to temperance. With the exception of Tom Barclay, virtually all prominent Leicester labour politicians, from MacDonald down, showed a strong commitment to the temperance cause, and many were teetotallers. In accordance with the ideas expounded in Philip Snowden's Socialism and the Drink Question (1908), temperance was seen as an important issue for the labour movement, although it was subordinated to a wider social critique, instead of taking the place of one as it did in more orthodox, temperance views.

The institutions promoting leisure activities in the labour movement were, by contemporary commercial standards archaic, reproducing forms evolved by nonconformist, radical and temperance organisations over the preceeding 60 years. In the Clarion movement, such archaism was conscious, an aspect of Blatchford's social thought. In other cases, it was in part a matter of resources, but it also represented a desire

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82. P. Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour (1967), p.263.

to resist change in popular culture, just as co-operative shoemakers hoped in the 1880s to escape changes in the organisation of work. Writers such as Gould were in many ways the heirs of moralists such as Joseph Dare. It is indeed difficult to agree with S.G. Jones's description of the Labour movement's view of recreation as an 'embryonic socialist critique' which was to be 'codified and legitimised' in the inter-war years. It is easier to assent to his conclusion that 'There were few attempts to see leisure in relation to the dominant mode of production, ultimately determined by the capitalist order of society'.[83]

For 19th century workers, commitment to the labour movement and certainly to socialism, involved a rejection of the more hedonistic aspects of popular recreation, and notably of the culture of the pub. Many had already made the choice, as church members or teetotallers, before encountering socialism. The destructive consequences of excessive drinking were apparent daily, and manifested themselves as a hindrance to the emancipation of labour. In making this stand, they found themselves arguing many points together with middle class reformers. The result was the opening of a gap between their cultural aspirations and those of broad sections of the working class, which though not absolute, nevertheless prevented the kind of cultural direction which Milliband found lacking. Just as NUBSO found itself allied to progressive employers in the question of work discipline and indoor working, so the ILP found itself supporting Liberal magistrates' licensing policy in the 1900s.

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83. S.G. Jones, op.cit., pp.92-3.

CONCLUSION

It has not been the intention of this study to test any one theory of the history of popular culture, nor to view its evidence systematically in the light of particular debates within social history, such as that concerning the labour aristocracy. The aim throughout has been to ask empirically answerable questions which might facilitate generalisation, but which do not in themselves constitute a theory of leisure. In this, the work follows pioneering efforts of Cunningham and Bailey, as well as much that has been published on specific aspects of the history of recreation. This is the more necessary given the relative newness of the field, and is appropriate to a local study. Nevertheless, writing a total history of leisure even in a single locality is no more feasible than Ranke's project of objective history, telling what really happened in an unmediated way.[1] Principles of selection, concern with certain issues and ways of perceiving the history of leisure are implicit throughout. Each chapter has centrally concerned power and ownership, and their implications for the experience of recreation. It has been taken for granted that 19th century Leicester was a society in which economic and political power were unevenly distributed and that those unevennesses had specific consequences for the development of leisure facilities and the use of non-work time. But this is the starting point for empirical, historical work, not a cue to begin to fit data into a model which exists independently of the historical record. At all points, efforts have

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1. On Ranke, see Pieter Geyl, Debates with Historians (1962 ed.), ch.1.

been made to avoid collapsing the deeds of historical actors into manifestations of ideological state apparatuses, hegemonic practices or blunter aspects of class conflict. This is not to suggest that ideology, conflict and class should be absent from the account since they can be powerful tools for the understanding of social processes. But they are not the only topics on the historical agenda.[2]

This study has concentrated on the institutional provision of recreation and entertainment to a greater extent than on the experience of it, and it has largely dealt with activities carried on outside the home. Its focus has been on those undertaking initiatives in such provision, both from within and outside the working class. At the same time, it has been necessary to evaluate the success or effect of such ventures, and to be aware of the material and ideological circumstances under which they were undertaken. The project outlined in the introduction of finding ways into the non-political culture of the working class can only be partly realised by this means. It has been possible to delineate institutional, legal, even physical boundaries to working class leisure in the town, but the experience of it has been viewed largely through the eyes of outsiders or from the point of view of selected members of the working class, political activists, witnesses at Parliamentary enquiries, correspondents to newspapers, lawbreakers. On the other hand, it has been possible to give a more nuanced description of contradictions

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2. The following discussion is informed by the refutation of structuralist approaches to the writing of history in E.P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory (1981).

within the ranks of those who contributed to the shaping of recreation, and to go beyond the ranks of rational recreationists, councillors and magistrates to examine the activities of promoters of commercial leisure and spectator sport.

This conclusion will deal with two major substantive issues which permeate both the thesis and recent literature on the subject; the relationship between recreation and social order, and the role of commercial entertainment. It is also desirable to consider the usefulness for the historian of recreation of the concepts of social control and hegemony.

A. Recreation and social order

From evidence presented in chapter 1, it is clear that Leicester had a distinctive economic and occupational structure which was decisive for the development of popular culture. The long persistence of domestic outwork and workshop production, coupled with the small scale of most firms made for a very different structure of power in recreational provision than that found in Reading, dominated by a single great paternalistic enterprise, Bristol, with several, or in Lancashire factory towns. More detailed comparison with the third of these will make this point more explicitly.

Joyce accounts for the social calm of the Lancashire cotton towns between 1850 and 1890 in terms of deference, defined as an acceptance by the workforce of the inevitability and justice of the social relations of factory production.[3] It was engendered by the permeation of the

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3. Joyce, op.cit.

daily life of workers and their families by the institutions and, at a basic level, values of their employers. This was at a more mundane level than is suggested in labour aristocracy or Gramscian theory. It was the paternalistic employer who most successfully translated the dependence implicit in wage labour into deference. According to Joyce, 'the development of industrial paternalism from the 1840s was of central significance in the evolution of British society'.[4] For those areas of associational life of which leisure was a part, 'the self-expression inherent in earlier forms of working class public behaviour was transformed into expressions of inclusion in and acceptance of the local and national social order'.[5] The preconditions of successful urban paternalism of this type were early, well-established family businesses, with family firm ideology and inter-generational continuity, a high degree of mechanisation, which made for large firms and firm-specific skills and job hierarchies, and the geographical domination of the community by the firm and its owners' property.

Joyce's description overstates the coherence of 'urban villages' and ignores institutions, notably the pub, the music hall and sports, which cut across class harmony. Nor does he deal with problems of social order in larger towns, such as Manchester. Nevertheless, his work may serve as a model in comparison with which major differences in social relations in Leicester may be drawn out. Like West Yorkshire, Leicester in the 19th century did not enjoy conditions conducive to deferential

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4. ibid., p.134.
5. ibid., pp.185-6.

behaviour on the part of the working class. It was not a stable community politically after the 1840s, as the frame rent and poor law issues continued to cause unrest, nor was it stable demographically, enjoying its fastest growth in the 1860s, '70s and '80s. It was after 1850 that its economic base underwent major transformation, not before, as hosiery underwent mechanisation, the factory-based elastic web industry was introduced and the boot and shoe industry grew, but on a semi-outwork basis until the 1890s.

The structure of capital in the town was very different from that in Lancashire. Hosiers, such as the Biggs's, Richard Harris and Corah, were employers on a large scale, but not predominantly of factory workers until the 1870s. Much of the work was carried out in workshops for middlemen. Where there were factories, discipline could be severe, reminiscent of early mills. Elastic web weaving and spinning were factory industries, but the former was rootless, growing suddenly in the 1850s and 1860s. Like hosiers, the employers were quick to move out of Leicester when there was the prospect of trade union opposition, as in the 1863 strike.

Leicester industries were not conducive to paternalism even where there were factories and large firms. Few survived from before 1850 to the end of the century, and there were several spectacular bankruptcies, including John Biggs in the 1860s and Richard Harris in the 1870s. Work was seasonal, as in all garment trades, and liable to the vagaries of fashion. Only a small number of the best practice firms worked to stock or sought to keep workers on in slack times. The low degree of mechanisation and similarity of machinery throughout both main industries did not make for attachment to a single firm. Leicester workers were, on the whole, able to cultivate an independence of their employers which,

if often accompanied by low incomes and irregular work, is in sharp contrast to the regular habits of Joyce's workers. As Brooker shows for Northampton shoe workers,[6] and as is set out in chapter 1, much of Leicester's working class enjoyed a culture of irregular working hours, drinking, gambling and old sports such as ratting. Employers accepted this in part for reasons to do with the practicalities of the putting out system, but also resented it as a threat to good work and social order. It is in this context that many of the bourgeois initiatives to promote some forms of leisure and suppress others, described in chapters 2, 3 and 4, must be seen.

Some Leicester employers intervened directly in the provision of leisure activities by organising treats for their workpeople. But this was not an appropriate form for most, and even those who did become involved in this way seem to have abandoned or downgraded their efforts by 1880. There were individual philanthropic efforts outside the factory. Harris supported the Thorpe Street chapel, Archibald Turner sold cheap land for the West End Recreation Ground, William Biggs sponsored sports on the Welford Road recreation ground. But of far greater impact were collective efforts. Leicester had no equivalent of Peel Park or Strutt's arboretum at Derby, and aristocratic initiatives were few (see chapter 5 on theatre). In their place were initiatives such as the Leicester Domestic Mission (chapter 3), support for the Temperance movement, especially the Temperance Hall (chapter 4) and the recreational efforts of the council and magistrates (chapters 2 and 4). Whereas Joyce sees such activity as an extension of factory based paternalism, in Leicester it was a substitute for it. In this sense, a major conclusion of the

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6. Brooker op.cit

thesis is that the contribution of municipal authorities to the development of leisure should, in cases such as Leicester, be restored to a prominence which understandable reaction against the tradition of municipal history has denied it.

Intention and performance are not the same thing. A criticism of social control models of 19th century society is that would-be controllers were singularly ineffective in imposing their will. Efforts in Leicester shared the fate of rational recreation nationally. Undeniably, the Leicester Domestic Mission and Vaughan's Working Men's College were to have an impact on the culture of the group from which the labour movement's leadership was drawn (chapter 7) and libraries were well used by some sections of the working class (chapter 2), but many were left out. Philanthropic ventures facilitated but did not create a working class culture of respectability, and it was under the leadership of such people that NUBSO undertook the indoor working campaign which finally ended domestic production in the boot and shoe industry. But the effect was unintended and long delayed. While the case fits an unsophisticated version of the labour aristocracy theory, it would be an exaggeration to make this out as a major aspect of the development of popular culture in Leicester. Ultimately, the elite's task was too great, and the workforce remained outside its direct control, with implications for the development of radical and socialist politics and the survival of a popular culture of independence, dissolute by middle class standards but, in the long term, politically harmless. Willingness by employers to support the Charity Organisation Society, Melbourne Hall, church extension and city chapels from the 1870s on show that not all were willing to leave the problem of public order to solve itself as political threat gave way to apolitical hedonism. The continued severity of the bench and the local act of 1884 underline this point.

Whatever the effectiveness of the urban elite's individual and collective efforts to maintain social stability and public order by recreational provision and in policing public manifestations of an independent popular culture, it is appropriate to consider how useful the concepts 'social control' and 'hegemony' are in understanding the Leicester material.[7]

Ideas of social control have dominated writing on 19th century leisure during the last decade - the discussion above is no exception. This dominance is understandable; it enables historians to assert the importance of leisure in relation to wider themes in social and political history. Nineteenth century sources show that many people were concerned with the 'problem' of leisure and wished to control it, both to prevent disorder and immorality and as a means of changing behaviour more generally, for example in relation to work discipline. Some historians have gone on to claim that conflicts over leisure time were as important as conflicts within the workplace, a view shared by the Yeos and disputed by Stedman

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7. For discussion of the concept of social control and its application to the study of history, see Donajgrodzki op.cit, Introduction; F.M.L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', Economic History Review, 2nd series vol. XXXIV, No. 2 May 1981; Stedman Jones (1977); Society for the Study of Labour History 'Conference Report: Working class Leisure; Class Expression and/or Social Control' Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin 1976. On hegemony, see Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971); James Joll, Gramsci (1977); Robert Q. Gray, 'Bourgeois Hegemony in Victorian Britain' in Jon Bloomfield (ed.), Class, Hegemony and Party (1977). For a rejection of the value of Gramscian approaches, see John Golby and Bill Purdue, 'Popular Culture: History and Theory. Mid-Victorian Popular Culture', Social History Society Newsletter Vol. 7 No. 1, Spring 1982.

Jones. F.M.L. Thompson has questioned the use of the term 'social control' which, when separated from the functionalist discourse in which it originated, lacks precise meaning and serves only to narrow the scope of our interest in recreation and popular culture.[8] The Leicester material shows that there was a desire on the part of sections of the town's Liberal elite, of churchmen and of wielders of municipal authority, to police the amusements of the people. They attacked, with bye laws, prosecutions and public denunciations a wide range of popular pursuits from sabbath breaking to nude bathing. In some respects they were successful, and certain changes in patterns of recreation can be related to legislation. In that sense, control of the recreational activities of one part of the population by another took place. But the victory of reformers was at best partial and, as Stedman Jones points out, not unambiguously one of bourgeoisie over proletariat.[9] It remains questionable whether such restrictions on popular culture were in fact necessary to the maintenance of social order. It could be argued that they were more a matter of convenience and of the satisfaction of aesthetic or religious sensibilities rather than of the preservation of the social conditions necessary for capitalist production. The long survival of quasi-artisanal independence suggests that this was indeed the case. 'Social control' in the sense of maintaining the social order by indirect means is then not an appropriate term to use.

The same can be said concerning hegemony. Once again, the imprecision of the term arises from its removal from the discourse in which it originated. Gramsci's work concerns centrally the problem of the legitimacy of the

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8. F.M.L. Thompson op.cit.

9. Stedman Jones (1977).

state, and in particular of the Italian state of 1870 and of Bolshevik rule in 1917. Hegemony figures principally as a means of the state's use of the agencies of civil society, as opposed to political coercion, to ensure the rule of the class which it represents. There are considerable difficulties in applying what remains a Leninist notion of class conflict to the discussion of popular culture in 19th century Britain, where the role of the state and its relationship to class rule is far from straightforward. Only by doing violence to the evidence, by presupposing that the state is to be found acting behind all manner of institutions which may superficially be in conflict with the state, particularly in its local manifestations, can hegemony be preserved in the account in any but a figurative sense. The Yeo's injunction 'to see the state through the material presence and ideologies of huge forms of commercialism which advertise their autonomy, their freedom and their supposed subordination to mass popular demand'[10] is not a helpful approach to the study of entertainment industries. The rhetoric of 'giving the people what they want' does indeed invite critical appraisal, but it is not to be seen as a cover for state power.

Hegemony is an attractive concept in that it offers the prospect of uniting a diverse range of practices originating from numerous, often apparently unrelated institutions. The allied concept of negotiation seems to allow both for working class creativity within structured dependence, and to account for the failure of projects of social control. Yet to accept, as Richard Johnson does, that hegemony is 'a state of disjunctions

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10. Yeo and Yeo op.cit., p.299.

and unevennesses' is to introduce such randomness into the model that it collapses as theory. From the historian's point of view, describing the 'disjunctions and unevennesses' becomes a task of empirical research hardly distinguishable from conventional historical procedures. At most, Gramscian concepts may help delimit the agenda, but they are not a guide to the likely results of enquiry.

Indisputably, cultural power was unevenly distributed in 19th century Leicester. Those who exercised it did so in ways generally congruent with their other social and economic concerns. But there is little evidence that it was this which established the legitimacy of capitalism among the town's workforce after 1850. Acceptance of subordination did not preclude the existence of a culture of independence resistant to efforts to impose discipline at work and away from it. But that subordination was inherent in the wage relationship itself. For much of the period, it did not involve the further submission to factory discipline for many workers. Where the factory system was successful, notably in the hosiery industry, it could appear as an alternative to moribund domestic production. It does not seem necessary to posit the exercise of social control over popular culture as the origin of a fundamental shift in work discipline and in the social relations of production. Indeed, given the survival of capitalist production and the social order despite the persistence of quasi-artisanal traditions, it could be argued that rational recreation and the involvement of the municipal authorities may well tell us more about middle class fears than the reality of working class threats to political structures after 1850.

B. Commercial entertainment: deus ex machine?

The problem of 'seeing the state' and identifying processes of hegemony and negotiation becomes more acute in considering commercial forms of recreational provision, generally assumed to be increasingly dominant after c.1880. Whereas the language of control and domination was used explicitly by rational recreationists, it was largely eschewed by entrepreneurs, or used opportunistically to win the sympathy of local authorities. The demands of running highly capitalised businesses required that good order be maintained, and licensing authorities were less likely to be provoked into censorious action by respectable entertainments, but it is difficult to identify the forms of commercial entertainment with explicit motives towards hegemony of social control on the part of entrepreneurs. The capitalist market and prevailing political and moral environment favoured certain types of activity and structures of ownership rather than others - entertainment industries followed a similar trajectory of centralisation and regional or national concentration characteristic of other late 19th century industries, although the extent of this in Leicester should not be exaggerated. But intentionality is absent and without it hegemony becomes a hidden hand, removing the agency of actual people in specific circumstances from the account.

Commercial leisure appears as a destructive force in a number of accounts of late 19th century leisure. For Stephen Yeo, business modes displace vice-presidential and democratic forms of voluntary organisation outcompeting more convivial forms in the contest for the allegiance of the people, turning participants into audience, members into consumers. Resistance to them is enjoined since 'even where involvement is not aggressive, private (economic) and public (political) contrivance from above saturates any form that one examines in capitalism, from Butlin's

to Brighton and Hove Albion Supporters' Club'.[11] There remains a belief in the possibility of more open, democratic, small-scale and participatory forms of recreation. The late 19th century appears in Stephen Yeo's account of Reading as a time when the choice to establish them was not made, although there were material reasons why this should have been the case. In Patrick Joyce's account, commercial leisure is both a product of stable urban society, with rising real wages, and one of the gravediggers of the factory community. 'The stabilisation of urban life in the period gradually brought with it the organisation and commercialisation of the townsman's pursuits' and in turn 'the experience of leisure competed with and finally triumphed over the hold of the factory on people's social life ...'[12]

Such accounts tend to see commercial leisure as external to previously existing communities. Joyce, for example makes few remarks about centres of resistance to the culture of the factory such as the pub. As the Leicester evidence suggests, pubs, the theatre, concert halls and fairs were run commercially from mid-century and before. The commercialisation of leisure which Plumb discusses with reference to the middle class in the 18th century had made its mark on popular recreation from early in the 19th century. But at the same time, this evidence warns against anticipating the transformation of quantity into quality in the study of later 19th century leisure industries. In Leicester at least, while it is possible to point to such ventures as the Stoll and MacNaughten music hall chains and the management of the theatre and Opera House

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11. ibid., p.137.

12. Joyce op.cit., p.338.

by Winstanley and Milton Bode and Edward Compton, much of the commercial sector remained weak financially until the end of the period. Sport did not generally make money for its promoters. The drink trade in Leicester retained archaic features, with few tied houses and resistance to the Birmingham system for licence exchanges. Many of the most popular forms of entertainment, including bazaars, the Abbey Park Show and the Infirmary Sports - remained philanthropic in organisation or intention, or were under municipal control.

There has been a tendency to neglect the positive aspects of 19th century leisure, as they were enjoyed by audiences and participants. Working class culture, in public expressions such as music hall, sport and the pub, have been seen largely as making the best of a bad job, a communal whistling in the dark. Cunningham, for example, concludes that 'The working class had come to accept small gains within capitalism, and leisure was the chief of them'.[13] In this view, leisure was tolerated as an area of relative autonomy and choice, although within strict constraints. In other formulations, the severity of such constraints dominates, as when Richard Johnson writes that 'It is a matter of historical record that working class culture has been built around the task of making fundamentally punishing conditions more inhabitable'.[14] In Stedman Jones's account of the remaking of the working class, commercial leisure, represented by the music hall, is both product and reinforcement of the acceptance of subordination.

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13. Cunningham op.cit., p.187.

14. Johnson op.cit., p.237.

Such views have their origin in the belief that there is something to be explained away, apologised for in popular entertainment. Why did a once politically active working class settle for the tawdriness, vulgarity, the alienating, exploitative forms, the chauvinism and conservatism of commercial leisure? Sympathetic accounts plead that the ways in which such forms were used in working class sociability, not their content, were important and often wholesome. Yet Hoggart's puritanism resonates throughout cultural studies, and his statement that 'Most contemporary popular entertainment encourages an effete attitude to life, but still much life has little direct connexion with it' both sums up the frustrations of radicals since the 1890s and before with the lack of earnestness and political content of working class leisure pursuits, and holds out hope that all is not lost.[15]

The historian of popular recreation needs to be aware of this tradition of critical writing, but to remain open minded as to the aesthetics of the object of study. It cannot be taken as inevitable that hierarchically organised entertainment industries produce cultural goods of declining worth. The historical task is to try to understand the context in which entertainment industries developed, to explore the range of meanings available at any given time, rather than to illustrate a process held a priori to be one of increasing alienation. The capitalist organisation of leisure industries set limits as to the survival and success of various organisational forms, but did not determine them. In a society without a totalitarian state, with a widely professed ideology of laissez faire,

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15. Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (1957) p.234.

a working class preserving a degree of autonomy at work and away from it, there was considerable room for creativity. A result was the development of recreational provision of a highly diverse nature. Neither social control nor hegemony suffice to do more than point out an area for investigation. They invite empirical research as the basis for generalisation, rather than facilitating theorising which is prior to historical study. This thesis has aimed to provide material drawn from a single town which will contribute to that grander project.

APPENDIX I

Works Treats reported in Leicester Chronicle. (5-yearly sample)

| Date | Firm | Trade | No. on Treat | Destination | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18.6.53 | Walker & Kempson | hosiery | | Bradgate | warehouse employees |
| 18.6.53 | Corah | hosiery | 100 | Scraptoft Hall | -ditto- |
| 27.8.53 | Brewin & Whetstone | spinners | | Bradgate | |
| 31.12.53 | Barber & Hipwell | hosiery | | works | Chr. dinner |
| 11.7.63 | H. Turner & Sons | elastic web | | Knighton strawberry gardens | |
| 11.7.63 | Fielding Johnson | spinners | | Bradgate | 20 vehicles |
| 18.7.63 | Squires | shoes | | Bradgate | |
| 18.7.63 | I.P. Clarke | sewing cotton | | Bradgate | |
| 18.7.63 | Stanyon & Gardiner | boot and shoes | | Bradgate | |
| 1.8.63 | Walker & Kempson | hosiery | 500 | Bradgate | |
| 1.8.63 | Snow & Bennett | shoes | | Bradgate | |
| 1.8.63 | Green's | shoes | | Bradgate | |
| 1.8.63 | C. Noon's | hosiery | | Bradgate | warehouse |
| 8.8.63 | Corah | hosiery | | Bradgate | |
| 8.8.63 | Foster & Bunny's | hosiery | | Bradgate | |
| 8.8.63 | Pool & Lorrimer's | hosiery & shoes | | Bradgate | 12 wagons |
| 8.8.63 | Chamberlain & Thompson | spinners | | Bradgate | -ditto- |
| 8.8.63 | Luke Turner's | elastic web | | Bardon Hill | by rail |
| 8.8.63 | Brewin & Whetstonee | spinners | 500 | Matlock | by rail |
| 22.8.63 | Harrold | tailor & draper | | Bradgate | |
| 29.8.63 | George Baines | spinner | | Bradgate | |
| 29.8.63 | Leicester Gas Works | gas | | Bradgate | ½ on 14th; ½ on 21st. |
| 4.1.68 | Corah | hosiery | 400+ | works | |
| 15.2.68 | Emberlin & King | cigars | | works | new warehouse |
| 1.8.68 | R. Morley & Sons | retail | | W. Eaves | Thur. ½ hol. |
| 1.8.68 | Jos. Canyer | retail | | W. Eaves | -ditto- |
| 1.8.68 | Luke Turner & Co. | elastic web | c.300 | W. Eaves | |
| 1.8.68 | Warner & Sheen | hosiery | | Humberstone Rd. | field sports |
| 1.8.68 | Webster | hat manuf. | 170 | Beaumanor | |
| 4.1.73 | Chronicle & Mercury | newspaper | | Wright's Dining Rm. | |
| 31.5.73 | Smith & Pike | | | works | |
| 2.8.73 | Evans & Stafford | cigars | c.500 | Crystal Palace | |
| 9.8.73 | Evans & Stafford | cigars | c.450 | Crystal Palace | |
| 6.9.73 | T.W. Rust & Co. | spinners | | Matlock | train |
| 26.1.78 | S. Barker & Co. | printers | | Black Boy (pub) | |
| 6.7.78 | W & R Coltman | hosiery | | W. Eaves | retirement |
| 20.7.78 | T. Charlesworth | dyers | | Croft Hill | |
| 3.8.78 | Chas. Noon & Co. | hosiery | c.50 | Longcliffe | |
| 10.8.78 | E. Tomkin & Sons | foundry | | W. Eaves | |
| 10.8.78 | J. Tyers | builder | | field, Humb. Rd. | Bank Holiday |
| 10.8.78 | Winks & Son | booksellers | c.30 | Granville Ho., Wigston Fields | Bank Holiday |

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Appendix I (cont'd)

| Date | Firm | Trade | No. on Treat | Destination | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24.8.78 | Royce, Gascoine & Co. | boots | 200+ | W. Eaves | |
| 14.9.78 | R. Harris & Sons | hosiery | | Newfoundpool | sports |
| 6.1.83 | T.H. Downing & Co. | hosiery | 200+ | works | new prems. |
| 6.1.83 | Corah | hosiery | 2,000+ | works | extension |
| 6.1.83 | R. Walker & Sons | hosiery | 320 | works | new prems. |
| 2.83 | A. Chamberlin | hosiery | 150 | works | new prems. |
| 2.83 | Holland | contractor | | The Stirling Castle | dinner |
| 2.83 | Pegg | engineer | | -ditto- | dinner |
| 5.83 | Walker, Kempson & Brown | boot & shoe | 1,200 | Skegness | Bank Hol. |
| 5.83 | Thos. Bowmar & Sons | dyers | | | 23rd annual |
| 23.6.83 | T. & H. Herbert | builders | | Charnwood Forest | |
| 14.7.83 | W. Carr | shoes | | Longcliffe | |
| 11.8.83 | Wm. Cox | builder | | Skegness | |
| 29.9.83 | James Beal | timber merchant | | Skegness | |
| 31.1.88 | Tramway Co. | transport | | Cook Memorial Hall | dinner |

APPENDIX II

Places of Worship in 1911

Anglican:

St. Margaret's
St. Nicholas
St. Martin's
St. John's
St. Mark's
St. Paul's
St. Matthew's
Christ Church
St. James the Greater
St. Augustine's
St. Alban's
St. Saviour's
St. Michael's
St. Mary Magdalene's
St. Michael's
St. James's
All Souls
St. Mary's
All Saints
St. George's
St. Luke's
Holy Trinity
Church of the Martyrs
St. Andrew's
St. Peter's
St. Leonard's
St. Stephen's
Church of the Apostles
St. Peter's
St. Barnabas
St. John the Baptist
St. Hilda's
St. Andrew's
St. Philip's

Anglican mission rooms:

St. Andrew's, New Bridge Street
St. Crispin's (St. Luke's) Lewin Street
St. Gabriel's (St. Michael's) Gipsy Lane
St. George's, East Short Street
St. Matthew's, Lead Street
St. Peter's, Abbey Lane
Leicester Mission to the Deaf and Dumb, Wycliffe Street

Congregationalist:

East Bond Street
Oxford Street
Sanvey Gate
Emanuel Church
Humberstone Road
Gallowtree Gate
London Road
Wycliffe Church, College Street
Clarendon Park
Loughborough Road

Baptist:

Archdeacon Lane
Dover Street
Belvoir Street
Charles Street
Victoria Road
Belgrave Road Tabernacle
Newarke Street
Clarendon Park Road
Paradise Mission, York Road.
Friar Lane
Carley Street
Carey Hall
Harvey Lane
Melbourne Hall
Abbey Gate Mission Hall
Robert Hall Memorial
" " " ; Harvey Lane branch
Palmerston Mission, Taylor Street

Baptist, Ebenezer Chapel:

St. Peter's Lane

Calvinist:

Zion Chapel, Erskine Street

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Appendix II (cont'd)

Wesleyan:

Bishop Street
King Richard's Road
Belgrave Hall
Broad Street (Clarence Hall)
Humberstone Road
Wesley Hall, Mere Road
Aylestone Road
Clarendon Park Road
Temperance Hall
Northgate Street
Saxe Coburg Street

New Connexion:

St. Paul's, Melbourne Road
Harrison Road

Presbyterian:

De Montfort Square

Primitive Methodist:

Catherine Street
Claremont Street, Belgrave
Fosse Road
Edgehill Road, Belgrave
Belgrave Gate
Cavendish Road
Curzon Street
Melbourne Road

Methodist Free Church:

Lower Hill Street

Free Church:

St. Thomas's, East Park Road

Catholic:

Holy Cross, New Walk
Church of the Sacred Heart, Mere Road
St. Peter's, Leamington Street
St. Patrick's, Royal Street East

Unitarian:

Great Meeting
Free Church (Unitarian), N'boro Road

Friends:

Prebend Street

Others:

Gospel Hall, 2 King Street
Free Gospel Hall, Causeway Lane
Bestwood Hall, Vestry Street
Christian Brethren Meeting Rooms, Andrewes Street and Grafton Street
Church of Christ, Melbourne Road
Oak Street Room, Humberstone Road
Spiritualists' Mission Room, Crafton Street.
Christadelphians, Waterloo Street
Evangelist Mission, Crafton Street
Salvation Army, Alfred Street
Meeting Room, East Street

Appendix II (cont'd)

Railway Mission Hall, Mere Road
Mere Road, Mission Hall
Catholic Apostolic, New Walk
Hebrew Congregation, Highfields
Latter Day Saints, Crafton Street

APPENDIX III

Numbers of Churches and Chapels by Denomination

| | 1881 | 1911 |
|---|---|---|
| Anglican | 18 | 34 |
| " Mission halls | 6 | 7 |
| Congregationalists | 8 | 10 |
| Baptists | 19 | 18 |
| " Ebenezer | 1 | 1 |
| Calvinists | 1 | 1 |
| Wesleyan | 6 | 11 |
| Methodist New Connexion | 2 | 2 |
| Primitive Methodist | 6 | 9 |
| Methodist Free Church | 1 | 1 |
| Presbyterian | 1 | 1 |
| Unitarian | 2 | 2 |
| Quakers | 1 | 1 |
| Roman Catholic | 2 | 3 |
| Others | 12 | 17 |
| TOTAL | 84 | 115 |

APPENDIX IV

Leicester Fosse FC - Committee 1884-97

| | | 1884 Cttee | 1891 Cttee | 1893 Cttee | 1897 Subscribers to LFFC Ltd |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A West | Tailor's Asst.(?) | ✓ | | | |
| F.S. Ashby | | ✓ | | | |
| F. Bromwich | | ✓ | | | |
| W. Johnson | | ✓ | | | |
| W.J. Cooper | Manager | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| F. Gardner | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Jos. Johnson | boot manufacturer | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| J. Atter | | | ✓ | | |
| James Johnson | | | ✓ | | |
| W.G. Jones | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| A.J. Stubb | boot Manufacturer | | ✓ | | |
| Frank Ashwell | Foundry owner | | | ✓ | |
| J.A. Hartopp | prov. merchant | | | ✓ | |
| Cornelius Kilby | Lithographer | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| J. Lea | | | | ✓ | |
| A.T. Porter | manager, leather merchants | | | ✓ | |
| T. Warran | | | | ✓ | |
| T.H. Woolerton | beer engine maker | | | ✓ | |
| J.F.L. Rolleston | gentleman | | | | ✓ |
| Thos. Seddon | boot manufacturer | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Sheldon Read | gentleman | | | | ✓ |
| Ernest A. marson | Assessor | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| J.J. Curtis | Auctioneer | | | ✓ | ✓ |

Sources: Tarbolton. PRO BT 31/158355/53988. LDP 16.8.93.

APPENDIX V

Leicester Fosse FC - directors

| | | 1.1901 | 11.1907 | 10.1913 | Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Vass | brick manuf. | ✓ | (ret.11.1907) - | - | 6 |
| Wm. Smith | boot " | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 12 |
| J.H. Smedley | contractor | ✓ | (ret.11.1908) ✓ | - | 6 |
| Thos. Collins | ins. agent | ✓ | (to 10.1905) ✓ | - | 4 |
| Geo. Woodford | bedding manuf. | ✓ | (ret.1905) - | - | 4 |
| Albert Wright | boot " | ✓ | (ret.1901) - | - | 1 |
| Wm. H. Squires | Co. sec. | - | 9.1901 ✓ | ✓ | 11 |
| E.J. Benn | ins. collector | - | 9.1901 ✓ | ✓ | 11 |
| Orson J. Wright | house agent | - | 3.1904 ✓ | (to 1.1909) - | 6 |
| Fred. Wm. Wright | builder | - | 3.1904 ✓ | (to 1.1909) - | 6 |
| S.G. Smith | builder's Mercht. | - | 3.1904 - | - | 1 |
| S. Mathew | plumber | - | 5.1905 ✓ | (ret.1.1909)- | 4 |
| W. Stevens | ins. agent | - | 10.1905 ✓ | ✓ | 7 |
| J. Blackwell | Corpn. official | - | ✓ | (to 1.1909) - | 2 |
| F. Norman | corn merchnt. | - | ✓ | (to 1.1909) - | 2 |
| C. Crossland | LV | - | - | 1.1909 ✓ | 4 |
| Wm. Shaw | manager | - | - | ✓ | 4 |
| L.H. Burridge | hos. factor | - | - | ✓ | 4 |
| Harry Livesey | clerk | - | - | ✓ | 4 |
| J. Hawkes | architect | - | - | ✓ | 4 |
| S. Scattergood | teacher | - | - | ✓ | 4 |
| N = 21 | | 6 | 10 | 10 | av. 5 yrs. |

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- a) unpublished sources
- b) published sources
  - i. Annual reports
  - ii. Church Magazines, Yearbooks, etc.
  - iii. Newspapers
  - iv. Directories
  - v. Books,pamphlets etc., Leicester and District
  - vi.Books,pamphlets etc., General
  - vii.Rules of clubs and societies
  - viii. Parliamentary Papers
  - ix. Pollbooks

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